Madhusudan Rao

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

Makers of
Indian
Literature

MADHUSUDAN RAO

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Preface

Madhusudan Rao was a major Oriya writer who shaped modern Oriya literature at the turn of the 20th century. Though there have been biographical as well as critical discussions on him in Oriya, there has been hardly any account of him in English. To that extent the present work is the first comprehensive work in English, both biographical and critical, on Madhusudan. The first biographer of Madhusudan was Mrutunjay Rath (1882–1924). Subsequently, other people, such as Alekh Prasad Das (b. 1902), Kalindi Charan Panigrahi (1901–1991) and Chintamoni Das (1903–1981) wrote on Madhusudan's life and career. But the best biography on Madhusudan was written by Abanti Devi, the poet's second daughter who was married to the son of Pandit Sibanath Sastri of Bengal. I am deeply indebted to Abanti Devi's book for many matters of detail about Madhusudan's life and career, as well as for specific information about Madhusudan's family and friends. But while giving an account of Madhusudan's literary work I have largely made my own assessment and interpretation, though I have always kept in mind the traditional approaches and attitudes about Madhusudan. Instead of giving a group of select poems from Madhusudan at the end, I have worked out the poems in the text. I hope readers will find it easier to appreciate the real power and strength of Madhusudan that way. On the whole, my purpose has been to acquaint the readers with a rare poet, for whom writing was a matter of conviction and an intense involvement with life. Mrutunjay Rath called Madhusudan *Brahma jnani*, that is, a man who acquired Wisdom. That is how generations of Oriyas have considered Madhusudan. That is how, I hope, the readers will

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take him, and to that effect, I will consider my efforts rewarded.

All the translations in the text, into English, have been done by myself, for which I have mostly used original Oriya text published in *Madhusudan Granthabali,* Grantha Mandir, Cuttack, 1983.

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Life and Career

Madhusudan Rāo (1853-1912), the poet, was one of the three most important writers in the later part of the 19th century, the other two being Phakirmohan Senāpati (1843-1916), the novelist, and Rādhānāth Rāy (1848-1908), the poet, who were responsible for introducing a new age in Oriya literature, subsequently generally known as the Modern Age. There were socio-political reasons for this, the most important of which was the occupation of Orissa by the British. This happened in 1803 when the British occupied Cuttack as a sequel to their victory over the Marahattas, and replaced the Marahatta rule which had continued in Orissa from 1751 to 1803. The new administration had initial difficulties which it encountered in local rebellions, the most serious being the revolt of ex-militia men (pāikas) of the deposed king of Khurdā, near Puri, called Paika Rebellion (1817). But by the middle of the century the new regime could entrench itself in Orissa, particularly in the three coastal districts of Balasore, Ṭuttack and Puri, which provided a continuous link between the Bengal and Madras Presidencies. There were changes in administration as well as in social situations and cultural atmosphere at par with such changes taking place elsewhere in India. Particularly the spread of English education and the introduction of printing press along with the rise of a salaried middle class in the towns, rendered a new generation of people to rise with new ideas and attitudes towards life, in the later part of the 19th century. Madhusudan belonged to this generation, and in effect along with Phakirmohan and Radhanath, and through his poetry and otherwise activities, led it in understanding and perception.

Madhusudan was born on 29 January 1853, at a place called Pathuriā Sāhi, in Puri town, in an auspicious festival-day according to Hindu almanac, dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, the

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goddess of learning. It was in a Maharastrian family domiciled in Orissa and said to be the distant cousins of the Bhonslas of Nagpur. The family was generally well-to-do, and Madhusudan's grand-father, Sadāsiv Rao, was an important member of the community. His parents were Bhāgirathi Rao and Ambikā Bāi, and Madhusudan was their first child. But Madhusudan's mother did not live long. She was 14 when Madhusudan was born, and at 19, five years after, while giving birth to her third child and first daughter, she died during the child-birth along with her new-born infant. It was a great misfortune for Madhusudan and his brother Jagannāth, who was only two and half years old at that time, particularly because Ambika Bai was reputed to be a very affectionate and sweet woman. The loss suffered by the child was later remembered by the adult poet in one of his poems, entitled *Mo Janani* (My Mother), where the poet refers to the loss in poignant lines, and points out how the loss ultimately became a matter of faith and strength to him: "My faith became like a talisman/which I wore in my heart/And could see day and night/ In sky, earth and water/ And everywhere/ My mother's figure/ That holds me in her breast/ And consoles me."

At that time Madhusudan's father was working as a toll-collector from pilgrims at the entrance of Puri. But the same year, that is, in 1858, the British government discontinued this practice, and as a consequence Bhagirathi Rao lost his job. That was a double misfortune to him immediately after his wife's death. After a while he was again given an appointment as a Zamadar in the Police Department, and was posted in the Police Station at Gop, at a distance of about 30 kms from Puri. As those were the days of difficult communication, and as Bhagirathi was alone in his house and would not have got time along with his duties to look after the children, he left them in the house of his brother-in- law at Puri presuming that they would be properly looked after, and went alone to Gop to join his duty. About a year passed. Then in one night Bhagirathi had a strange dream. He saw as if his late wife came to him with tearful eyes and requested him to bring the children to him as they were not properly treated, and if he did not act accordingly she would be compelled to take away the younger child to her. The dream was a great shock to Bhagirathi. He

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consulted his well-wisher and superior officer, Subal Chandra Basu, who was the Chief of the Police Station, and under his assurance he went to Puri and brought the children from their uncle's place to Gop. That was in 1859. Bhagirathi's pay was enough for the three of them. As far as possible he kept a keen watch on the children, and they grew up in comparative comfort and happiness in the company of their father.

Gop was a remote place without much facilities. It had no government school, and the entire primary education was given through local efforts, through a non-official agency generally known as *Mātibansa Abadhān*. In fact it was no agency. It consisted of a loose community of teachers, who were mostly of the Karan caste, and came from a particular area in Cuttack district and conducted single-teacher schools in different villages in Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts. They had no regular income, wherever they stayed the villagers fed them, and they usually conducted their schools either in the houses of rich men or outside, under shades of trees. The education they imparted was mostly functional, largely confined to primary knowledge in three R's, particularly in arithmetic, and to some extent literature. In a way, in the absence of better education, it was a good beginning for average students. There was such a school near the Police Station at Gop, and after about a year, when Madhusudan was 7, Bhagirathi enrolled both his children in the school.

Madhusudan was eager and alert in his studies, but he did not have to stay there for long. After about a year, in 1861, Bhagirathi got transferred from Gop to Bhubaneswar. Bhubaneswar was a small place at that time. But it was on the main communication line, a pilgrim town, and had better facilities than were available at Gop, and it had a government Middle Vernacular School, one of the few in Orissa at that time, where children were given new western education. Madhusudan was admitted to this school. It was a significant change not only as regards school-atmosphere, but also in the quantum and nature of education given to the students. From a limited traditional learning of an elementary, functional nature, conducted by a single teacher without any method whatsoever and in almost primitive conditions, he was transported to a place specially devoted to learning, conducted by

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trained teachers, through systematic, scientific methods, in new knowledge and modern areas of living. For the boy Madhusudan (he was only 8) it was more than a change of place. It was a change in approach, attitude and mental understanding.

But the school had one restraining factor. The medium of instruction was Bengali, most of the teachers were Bengalis, and all the text books were also in Bengali. It was because the western education had not become that wide-spread in Orissa at that time as it had been in Bengal, due to luke-warm interest on the part of the government and general resistance on the part of the people. In fact by 1859, as the records show, Orissa had only 3 secondary schools in three big towns, that is, Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, and only 19 primary and middle vernacular schools. Anyway Madhusudan did not have much difficulty in the school he was admitted. He was a quiet, serious student, exceedingly intelligent, and keenly given to studies. Thus naturally the teachers got interested in him, and particularly the Headmaster, Hari Bhattacharya, was eager that Madhusudan should go for higher studies. But higher education was expensive, to be done at Puri, and Madhusudan's father did not have the means to support him away from Bhubaneswar. Then suddenly, one day, as if to fulfil Bhattacharya's wishes, the opportunity came. One Mr. Woodrow, the then Inspector of Schools in Orissa, came to see the historic caves of Khandagiri and Udaygiri, near Bhubaneswar. After visiting the caves he came to inspect the school and stayed at Bhubaneswar for a day or two. As there was no proper accommodation at Bhubaneswar at that time for such high officials, the Headmaster Bhattacharya arranged for Mr. Woodrow to stay at the Police Station, and Bhagirathi, naturally a hospitable person, took much care of the Inspector. Next day when Mr. Woodrow visited the school and tested the students he was visibly impressed by Madhusudan's graceful appearance as well as by his range of knowledge and sharp intelligence. Added to that when he came to know that he happens to be the son of Bhagirathi, he immediately decided that he should go to read at the Zilla School (District School) at Puri and promised that he would be getting a remission of tuition fees for 5 years. Though it was partly helpful, Bhagirathi decided to avail himself of the opportunity and sent Madhusudan

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to Puri Zilla School in 1862, when he was nine.

The Zilla School at Puri provided much larger scope for development of Madhusudan's latent faculties. First of all, it was a much bigger school, with a large number of students and a number of well-trained teachers. It had an atmosphere of study, competition and seriousness, all of which favourably provoked Madhusudan. Besides, being the only important educational institution at Puri and one of the very few in the whole of Orissa, it had a pride of place in the consciousness of people at Puri, and was generally associated with various public activities in the town, which in a way provided an extra-educational dimension to the school and important social contact to the teachers and students. Initially it was difficult to arrange accommodation for the boy. But Bhagirathi had a good friend at Puri who also belonged to his community. He was Balarāmjee, a very honest, conscientious and affectionate man and also a well-to-do person. His job was to supply pounded-wheat to Jagannath temple, and thereby he supported a number of destitute women who used to earn their livelihood by pounding wheat at his place. Balaramjee gladly accommodated the boy and it is said that as he embraced the friend's son, as a mark of welcome he invoked the blessings of Lord Jagannath towards his protection.

Madhusudan took to his studies very well. He was studious, intelligent and had a keen desire to know more and more. He hardly wasted his time and rarely joined his fellow students in their pranks and follies. Thus he soon drew the attention of his teachers and topped his class every year. There was an interesting annual competition in the school at that time, initiated by the then District Collector of Puri, Mr. Boxwell. It was to answer 20 questions, 5 each, from 4 selected topics, and a student answering all would be eligible to get Rs.100.00, at the rate of Rs.5.00 per question. For three years continuously Madhusudan earned this award and conclusively established his credentials among the teachers and students. Similarly there was a running silver-medal weighing about 500 grams, donated by the King of Rewa, a feudatory state, and was to be given as a mark of recognition to the student standing first in all subjects in the annual examinations. Madhusudan earned this medal again and again. Besides, the

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number of books he received as prizes helped him to a large extent to solve his text-book problems.

Around 1864, Radhanath Ray, who subsequently became famous as a poet and educator, and who was at that time working as a teacher in Balasore Zilla School, got transferred to Puri Zilla School as a second teacher. Sometime earlier when Radhanath was visiting Puri and had come to see the school, he had noticed Madhusudan as a serious and a bit unusual student. Now after his transfer he came to teach history and geography in Madhusudan's class and picked up friendship with him. Initially it was a moral booster for Madhusudan who was falling frequently ill, and consequently feeling despondent about his studies. Radhanath taught him mathematics in which he was weak, and encouraged him to do well in examinations. But slowly the teacher-taught relationship thickened into an intimate friendship which lasted between these two great poets throughout their lives which was not even parted after death as both were buried at the same place. Radhanath's association and his own poetic talent brought out the hidden talent in Madhusudan. It was like a strange, rich awakening. He started moving as if in a trance. They together sat on the sea-beach, in the moonlit nights, and admired the great beauty and sublimity of the sea. They visited Swargadwār, the famous and legendary cremation ground at Puri, on the sea, and speculated on the mysteries of life and the great, abiding glory of the Great God. It was a rare accident, one may say about this friendship, due to which the eyes and imagination of the studious, grave boy opened to elements of beauty, grace and mystery which were to permanently shape his life later on. It is interesting to note that Madhusudan's first ever written poem, written in 1873, was entitled *Smasān* (Cremation Ground) which records the poet's feelings of life's futility and man's temporariness with reference to Swargadwar at Puri. Similarly two poems which he composed later, on Radhanath, not only praise him as a great, pioneering poet, but also show his own attachment and respect for the latter. The poem he composed as an elegy after Radhanath's death in 1908, makes a direct reference to their early friendship and intimacy at Puri, when he refers to him as 'the teacher of my adolescent days and a good friend'.

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Madhusudan's contact with two other persons at that time may be mentioned. One was Harihar Dās, a remarkable Sanskrit and Vedantic scholar, a great orator, patriot and reformer. Das was a rationalist and atheist, and was a leading spirit in initiating new ideas and manners into the traditional Hindu society. Both Madhusudan and Radhanath used to go to him and listen to his expositions and views. Madhusudan's cravings for knowledge were whetted by Das's sharp and profound scholarship, and he admitted that he was his 'great teacher', to the extent that Madhusudan's own religious conviction was seriously shaken and impaired by Das's strong atheism. But subsequently Madhusudan could grow out of it, and in a poem composed later in 1897, entitled *Param Pramān* (Ultimate Proof) he made a reference to the confusions of great scholars who put entire emphasis on rationality being the only link between the visible and invisible, and pointed out that there are many things beyond man's reckoning which can be obtained through simple faith and conviction.

The second contact was with Hari Das, a mendicant who stayed near the main temple, in one of the *muths* at Puri. He was not a scholar like Harihar Das. But he was well-versed in religious matters and led the simple, dedicated life of a saint. His was a benign influence on Madhusudan who frequently used to go to him to listen to his advice and many tales on religion and good living. A religious instinct grew in Madhusudan from his very childhood days so much so that he never used to drink even a drop of water without worshipping Lord Shiva as the first act in the morning. A strange tale related to this period of his life is told about him. It seems that one day in the morning as he was returning from the sea after his bath, he saw as if in a dream, a Great Being walking in his front, and every time the Being uttered *Om* the sky was filled with bright light. After some time this strange, great figure vanished at the end of the town. No doubt it was a spiritual vision. But it affected young Madhusudan's mind very much and as his daughter Abanti Devi puts it, it shook his mind for many days to come. Even much later, in 1891, when he composed his famous poem *Rushiprāne Debābataran* (The Descent of Divinity in the Rishi's Soul) there is a reference to such a vision, when at the advent of dawn, as the young rishi utters *Om*,

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it fills the whole sky and nature with great beauty, light and sound.

Though a student, Madhusudan's seriousness and sincerity in whatever he was doing became a common knowledge with the people who knew him. This aspect of his character came to be used in an interesting way, something almost novel at that time. The year was 1867 and he was 14. A very severe famine had set in Orissa (1866-1867) which later came to be known popularly as 'Na-anka', related to the 9th regnal year of the then King of Puri. It was largely caused by an administrative failure on the part of the government to supply rice at a time when the crops failed, and hundreds of thousands of people died in a matter of months. Madhusudan's friend, Phakirmohan, later gave a graphic account of the situation in his famous autobiography. He writes, "People started dying from the beginning of Phaguna (February-March). The number increased from day to day. In the streets, on the river banks, around the ponds, in the fields, in the forests — wherever you go, there are innumerable corpses everywhere. Slowly, the whole country got covered with corpses as it were." The district administration had set up centres to distribute rice at Puri and one Mahant Narayan Das, the head of a *muth* at Puri, and a public-spirited man, was actively helping the administration with his resources. On his request, Mr. Boxwell, the collector, entrusted Madhusudan with the responsibility to distribute rice to the needy, and Madhusudan, as the head of a voluntary group, did his work extremely well to the satisfaction of almost everybody. This was the beginning of a public spirit in Madhusudan which continued in him throughout his life. Secondly, at a private level, the famine so affected him that, it is said, he gave up eating fish or meat any more, and became a vegetarian in his food-habits so long he lived. Generally famine does not occur as a motif in Madhusudan's poetry, though at many places he has referred to the agonies and sufferings of people in a general way. But much later, in a poem entitled *Naba Basanta Bhābanā* (Thoughts for the New Spring, 1899), and in a context where the poet refers to man's timidity, depression and ugliness, one is slightly surprised to find a reference to famine which has been used poetically as an image — the 'monstrous days of famine' and the 'piling of skeletons'. One cannot ascertain how far this is a general reference

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to famine or the memories go back to the harrowing days of 'Naanka' between 1866 and 1869.

Probably the most important event that happened in Madhusudan's life while at Puri, was his marriage. His father had married for the second time around 1862, and about 3 years after, in 1865, at the age of 12, Madhusudan was given in marriage to the second daughter of Balaramjee, Madhusudan's earliest benefactor at Puri. The girl was 9 at the time of marriage, and her maiden name Champā Bai was later changed to Padmā Bai, as per Maharastrian custom, after marriage. The girl did not come to Madhusudan's house immediately. She waited till she attained her puberty a few years later, and the poet commemorates their first bridal night in a memorable sequence of three sonnets entitled *Jaubanar Swapna* (Dreams of Youth), written later and included in the collection *Basanta Gāthā* (The Songs of Spring, 1902), wherein he expresses his joy, pleasure and excitement at seeing the 'shy, simple' young lady like a figure of 'moonshine' in his room.

Madhusudan came to Puri in 1862, as a boy of 9, and there he stayed for 7 years, when he completed his career in the school. In 1869 he appeared at the Entrance Examination, stood first from Puri Zilla School, and obtained a scholarship of Rs.10.00 per month, after which, along with his brother and step-mother he shifted to Cuttack for further studies. In many ways his 7 years stay at Puri formed some of the basic traits of Madhusudan's character, particularly his religious-mindedness and love for all beings. Besides, his life was shaped as a studious, serious young man, and even at that age people came to value him for his balanced, responsible views on life and manners. Those were also formative days for him as a poet, which were sharpened by his close association with Radhanath and also by his living in the close proximity of the sea and nature at Puri. Puri was famous for its temples and sea-beach, and had an atmosphere of beauty, grace and meditation, besides being in a way, an important centre for the growth of Oriya intelligence and nationalism. These fertilized Madhusudan's mind and intelligence and when at the age of 16 he left Puri, it was with the confidence and conviction of a young man who looks hopefully and with strength into a more or less predictable future. Long afterwards when he composed a poem on

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Puri, entitled *Nilāchal*, which he unfortunately left unfinished, he records his appreciation of Puri, and sees it almost like a living being of unprecedented beauty and grace and as sublime as the 'new dawn rising from the vast, blue sea.'

II

In 1869 Cuttack was a small town, though most important urban centre in Orissa, and the seat of regional administration. It was the only place in Orissa where there was provision to read beyond Matriculation, though it was only for two more years, to complete the Intermediate Course. The degree one obtained was called F.A. There was no separate college. The course was conducted in the two higher classes attached to the then Cuttack High School (laterly known as Ravenshaw Collegiate School). Madhusudan had a close relative at Cuttack. He was Harijee, who was married to Gajarāj Bai, the eldest sister of Madhusudan's step-mother. He stayed with them in their house.

Chandicharan Bandyopadhyay was the Headmaster of the school, and under him there were two teachers for the F.A. classes. One was Rajkishor Bandyopadhyay, M.A.B.L., who was teaching English, and the other was Haranath Bhattacharya, who was teaching Philosophy. Rajkishor was a Premchand-Roychand Scholar, which was considered as a prestigious qualification at that time in Bengal. He was proficient both in English and Bengali, and was the author of two poetical collections, entitled *Mitrabilāp* and *Kābya Kalāp*. His teaching was not confined to English alone. While teaching Homer, Virgil and Milton, the famous epic writers of the West, he often used to compare them through profuse illustrations and analysis, with famous Indian epic writers such as Valmiki, Vyasa and Michael Madhusudan. Particularly he made the students aware of the great beauty and wisdom inherent in ancient Indian epics such as the *Mahābhārat* and the *Rāmāyan*. His comparative method, analytical approach, and sensitiveness to the beauty of literature inspired and influenced Madhusudan accordingly and his own understanding and analytical power grew. The other teacher Haranath, though young in age, was as if cut out to be a philosophy teacher. Apart from his scholarship, his spotless character and tranquillity of mind influenced the students

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very much. He was a Brāhma by religious conviction, a great admirer of Keshab Chandra, and had observed the ideals of Brāhma Samāj throughout his life, though he had never been initiated into the tenets of Brahma Dharma as such. He founded Utkal Brahma Samaj in July, 1869, and among his students who joined the Brahma Samaj under his influence, Madhusudan was a leading one. They often used to meet and pray, and this habit of quiet meditation and prayer for one God who covers the whole universe slowly filled the mind of Madhusudan and widened his understanding so much so that he finally gave up his sacred thread and joined Brahma Dharma.

There were other influences. One of the most important was his association with Peārymohan Āchārya (1851-1881), his class-mate and closest friend. Pearymohan was born near Salepur in Cuttack district, and his father was a pleader at Cuttack. After passing his Entrance Examination from Cuttack High School he joined Madhusudan in F.A. classes in the same year. He was intelligent, honest, truthful, strong-minded, and like Madhusudan he was a lover of solitude and quiet thoughts. Besides he was a self-less social worker, a gifted speaker, and a fearless crusader for social justice and equality. There were many matters on which both Madhusudan and Pearymohan thought alike and they had a perfect liasion in habits and attitudes. They used to sit together, move together, and draw up plans for the future with a view to improving the country's conditions. They had also similar reli-gious temperament and both joined Brahma Samaj under Haranath's influence. Often literature took pride of place in their discussions and they began to write and translate in their spare times. But Pearymohan could not complete his F.A. as he was expelled from the school in the second year because of a fearless, critical article which he wrote against the local administration in a fortnightly newspaper entitled *Utkalputra* (The Son of Utkal) which was founded and edited by him with the assistance of Madhusudan and another friend, Gobinda Rath. But Pearymohan's undaunted spirit and activities continued till his untimely death at the age of 30. He wrote the first-ever *History of Orissa*, in Oriya, and founded and ran a second Secondary School at Cuttack (which was subsequently named as Pearymohan Academy) purely

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through private efforts. Pearymohan's spirit was infectious. His fearless character and selfless activities influenced Madhusudan deeply. He was with Pearymohan when the latter died, and for many years afterwards, again and again, he used to recollect the last hours of Pearymohan with tearful eyes. The poem he composed after Pearymohan's death, entitled *Debatāmā Pearymohan Acharya* (Pearymohan Acharya, the Divine-Soul) testifies to his agony and respect for him. The poem invokes the spirit of the 'lion-hearted' man to come in a 'stream of eternal love' to revive those who have been left behind, including the poet.

One action of courage jointly performed by Madhusudan and Pearymohan, may be noted here. In 1871 Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen had initiated a draft bill in connection with Brahma marriage. It stipulated a minimum marriageable age of 18 for the bridegroom and 14 for the bride. As child-marriage was being frequently practised by the people at that time, this new draft bill was vehemently opposed by conservative people all over the country, and particularly in Bengal. When the public assent for the bill was sought for, and Orissa Brahma Samaj was consulted for its views, both Madhusudan and Pearymohan strongly and openly supported the bill. Subsequently when Keshab Chandra himself went against the provisions of the bill he had initiated, and tried to give his eldest, minor daughter in marriage to the minor prince of Cooch Bihar, a section of the Brahma Samaj protested against this action of Keshab Chandra. Among these protesters were Madhusudan and Pearymohan, who did so inspite of their great admiration for Keshab Chandra, and protested openly and strongly. Apart from Brahma Samaj, it was a mark of definite courage at that time, to protest so openly against the common prevailing practice of the society.

Madhusudan was an extraordinarily good student, and earned continuous affection and respect of his fellow-students and teachers. His literacy compositions were perfect and his hand-writing was one of the finest. Apart from his course-books he read plenty of other authors, and devoted his spare-time to literary activities. In 1871 he passed his F.A. and obtained a scholarship. In the usual course he would have continued to read for B.A. for which he was also quite eager. But there were no B.A. classes at Cuttack at that

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time. They were available only in Calcutta, which was at a distance of five days, difficult journey by road and steamer over sea from Cuttack. Besides, to arrange for stay of Madhusudan in Calcutta for two years was another problem. Hence his father did not like to put Madhusudan to all that inconvenience, though funding was not that difficult because Madhusudan had already been granted a scholarship of Rs. 20/- a month. But Madhusudan respected his father's wishes and agreed to discontinue his studies though his thirst for knowledge continued throughout his life, and in a sense, like Milton's, his real education began after the end of his formal education. Laterly when he was composing rhymes for children, one such rhyme was entitled *Vidyā* (Education) and it shows the poet's great regard for education. It ran as follows, as a piece of instruction to children :

Vidya is great wealth, earn it,
Vidya is a unique gem, wear it,
Vidya is a great friend, be-friend it,
Vidya is a great power,
Use it and conquer the world.

With the poet 'Vidya' was a great power and a friend throughout his life.

III

Since he could not continue his B.A., Madhusudan looked for a job and was selected as the third teacher of Puri Zilla School at Puri. But before he could get his appointment, R.L. Martin, the then School Inspector, appointed somebody from Bengal to the same post, and Madhusudan could not get his posting. Subsequently when Martin came to Orissa on inspection, he was met by Radhanath Ray, who was working at that time as the Deputy Inspector of Schools at Balasore. Radhanath complained to Martin about the cancellation of Madhusudan's appointment and spoke highly of his many abilities. Martin agreed to amend his mistake, and proposed to appoint him as an additional teacher in Cuttack High Sclool in a post which was going to fall vacant. But the post was abolished by the higher authorities and for the second time Madhusudan missed his appointment. Finally it came through,

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thanks to Martin, when Madhusudan got his first appointment in the Government job as the Headmaster of Jajpur Middle English School at Jajpur, at a distance of about 100 kms north of Cuttack, and about 200 kms. from Puri, on a pay of Rs. 45.00 per month.

It was in 1871, the year Madhusudan passed his F.A. and his age was 18. With his father's permission Madhusudan moved to Jajpur from Puri accompanied by his wife Padmabati, who was 15, a widow aunt, and his younger brother Jagannath. It was no easy matter at that time to go to Jajpur. Madhusudan and the family had to go in a go-cart, through cross-country roads, crossing a number of small and big rivers, and it took about a week's time to reach the place. In the school he found many students older than he in age and initially averse to the young Headmaster. But Madhusudan's sense of discipline, knowledge and personality finally won the day and he came to be regarded with a great deal of love and respect. He stayed at Jajpur for one and half years. He liked the job, and it gave him necessary experience and confidence. Though Jajpur was a remote place, it was an important place of pilgrimage, and a centre of religion and culture. Madhusudan's young mind responded to the many-sidedness of the place and of the many acquaintances he picked up at the place one was seminal for his future life. It was with Phakirmohan Senapati who was temporarily staying at Jajpur at that time. The friendship subsequently grew into great cordiality between them and at a later time Madhusudan composed a poem on Phakirmohan praising the latter's great poetic gifts.

Madhusudan's competence as the Headmaster drew the attention of higher authorities, particularly of John Beams, the noted linguist, who was at that time the collector of Balasore district and the Chairman of the District Committee that looked after the management of Balasore Zilla School. A vacancy occurred in the Headmaster's post of the school. Beams promoted the Second Teacher, Umaprasad Dey, to the post of the Headmaster, and appointed Madhusudan as the Second Teacher of the Zilla School. Madhusudan got relieved from Jajpur and came to Balasore to join his new post. But unfortunately a trouble arose. Inspector Hopkins of Orissa Circle, took objection to the appointment as it was not done with his approval, and he did not permit Madhusudan to join in his new post. Madhusudan was almost on the verge of going

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back to Jajpur, when Beams was appointed as the temporary Commissioner for Orissa, and with his higher powers he overruled the objection of Hopkins and confirmed Madhusudan's appointment at Balasore. It was 1873 (October 29). Madhusudan stayed at Balasore for about 2 years till he got a transfer to Cuttack High School in 1875, as Additional Teacher.

Madhusudan's stay at Balasore was significant from many acounts. The most important was that the period laid the foundation of his career as a writer. Radhanath and Phakirmohan were already there at Balasore by the time Madhusudan came, and the literary historians have spoken of the confluence as the confluence of three holy streams from which the modern Oriya literature emerged. Phakirmohan had already started a printing press at Balasore, which he was trying to run with a great deal of effort. He used the press to make occasional publications related to ancient Oriya literature from manuscript sources and tried to bring out an occasional news-cum-literary magazine, called *Bodhadāyini ebam Balasore Sambād Bāhikā.* Madhusudan's coming to Balasore spurred Phakirmohan's activities. Prince Baikuntha Nāth Dey, a local zamindar and rich man, established a new and better printing-press and left it at the disposal of three friends, and enthusiastically promoted the cause of the new Oriya literature. The effect was instantaneous. Radhanath and Madhusudan joined efforts to bring out an Oriya literary monthly, called *Utkal Darpan* (The Mirror of Utkal) which became the best literary magazine for many years to come. The two friends not only edited the journal, they were also its most important writers and many of the early writings of both were published in its pages. Thus Madhusudan's novelette *Pranayar Adbhuta Parinām* (The Strange Conclusion of Love) as well as essays such as on moon and star, comet, sun, vulcano etc. and poems such as *Nisitha Chintā* (Night Thoughts), *Smasana* and Bhababhuti's *Return to Ayodha* in Oriya translation, were first published here. Subsequently these, along with other writings of Madhusudan, were collected together in two books entitled *Prabandhamālā* (Garland of Essays, 1880) and *Kabitābali* (Collected Poems, 1876 and 1884).

In the context of existing traditional literature in Oriya, what Madhusudan and his friends, Radhanath and Phakirmohan wrote,

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had a new taste and conveyed a greater congeniality to the western-educated new reading public of Orissa. It also served another purpose. It provided much needed text-books in Oriya, written on contemporary topics and in contemporary language, to the newly established schools in Orissa. Phakirmohan did pioneering work in this area and he was whole heartedly supported by Radhanath and Madhusudan. In fact Madhusudan's two books, *Prabandhābali* and *Kabitabali* were prescribed as text-books in the schools for many years. It was almost a national need at that time to create an Oriya atmosphere in the schools in the place of a Bengali dominated one, and to inculcate a love for the Oriya language and literature in the hearts of young children. The efforts of three friends substantially responded to the needs.

An incident in Madhusudan's life during his stay at Balasore may be mentioned here. It highlights the elements of discipline and seriousness that had become parts of his character even at that early age of 20/22. One day he was invited to a function in the house of a rich man at Balasore, who happened to be a friend of his. He accepted the invitation, but on hearing that there would be dances by nautch-girls from ill-reputed houses on the occasion, he decided not to attend. But his friend was eager that he should come, and therefore arranged a separate sitting-place for him away from the place of dancing. During the dance it was decided that Madhusudan should somehow be brought to the place, and under consent from Madhusudan's friends and other onlookers, the girl who was dancing went over to the place where Madhusudan was sitting and caught hold of his hands and tried to drag him to the place of dancing, to the merriment of people present. Madhusudan never expected this. He was surprised and shocked. His heart revolted against the indignity and he immediately left the place. After this incident not only his links with his friend became loose, but he more or less decided to leave Balasore at the first opportunity. Yet Balasore provided the first most important step in Madhusudan's life. In contrast to Jajpur, which was a small remote place, Balasore was a larger place, more in the main communication line being nearer to Calcutta, and was more cosmopolitan. The atmosphere and association released Madhusudan's innate creative powers and launched him in a

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course that was to lead him to greater heights in future.

An idea how Madhusudan's personality was slowly getting formed may be glimpsed from *Nisitha Chinta*, a poem which he wrote at this time and a reference to which has already been made. The poem records the poet's great happiness, almost a surprised-happiness, at the calm and quiet that have come with the coming of night when almost everything everywhere is silent and still. The moon is in the mid-sky, and the poet's imagination ranges freely over different items which are now lost in sleep. But what is more important is the poet's steady realization of the presence of a Spiritual Being over and above the nature's calm and beauty. He is the ultimate spirit, the repository of all peace and happiness, away from suffering, and to Him the poet turns— "How long y'd be away from the abode of peace ?/How long y'd be seduced by the world ? If you want eternal peace in the midst of pain and distrees/Follow the path of dharma/and submit yourself at the feet of Him, the Master". Thus a love for nature and nature's calm, coupled with a religious understanding of life at large, came to stay, and were due to flower in the poet's subsequent life and writing.

Madhusudan was posted in Cuttack High School as Additional Teacher on a pay of Rs. 75/- p.m. and he shifted to Cuttack in 1875. But before that his first child Bāsanti, a daughter, had been born at Balasore on 5th June, 1874. Except for a few months in 1897, when Madhusudan went back to Balasore temporarily as Deputy Inspector, the rest of the time, that is, from 1875 to 1912, the year he died, he stayed at Cuttack and got deeply involved in the life at Cuttack, and through that in the main streams of contemporary Oriya life, as Cuttack was the seat of administration and the most important cultural centre of Orissa at that time.

Madhusudan stayed as Additional Teacher for a year, and worked to everybody's satisfaction. As a result when the post of Second Teacher fell vacant after a year, Madhusudan, in preference to many others, was appointed to the same post. There used to be many unruly students in the school at that time. But Madhusudan's seriousness and sincerity as well as his sympathy and understanding endeared him to the students and brought the unruly elements to such control that in a short while the atmo-

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sphere of the school vastly improved. In 1878, due to the efforts of T. Ravenshaw, the then Commissioner of Orissa division, and other enthusiastic persons such as the Maharaja of Mayurbhanja etc, the second grade college which was attached to Cuttack High School, was detached from it and was set up as an independent first grade college, the first college in Orissa, and was named Ravenshaw College, after T. Ravenshaw. The same year Cuttack High School also came to be named as Ravenshaw Collegiate School.

In 1880 after about 5 years of distinguished service, as a Second Teacher in the Cuttack High School, Madhusudan was appointed as the Deputy Inspector for Schools for Cuttack district on a salary of Rs.80-100, per month. He served in this post for about 11 years, till 1891, when in July, 1891, he was temporarily appointed as the Headmaster of Ravenshaw Collegiate School. In March, 1892, he was conformed in the post with a pay of Rs. 150 per month, and was elevated to the gazetted rank in the Education Service. He became the first Oriya Headmaster of Ravenshaw Collegiate School.

Radhanath Ray was the Joint Inspector of Schools for Orissa when Madhusudan became the Deputy Inspector. Both were posted at Cuttack, and once again began that fruitful association which was so beneficial to Oriya literature and education. As the records show, in 1880-81, Orissa had 32 Middle English schools and 35 Middle Vernacular schools, most of which were financed by the grants-in-aid system. Besides, in 1881-82, the three districts of Puri, Cuttack and Balasore had 7771 L.P. and U.P. schools, with a total student strength of 90176. A large segment of these came under Madhusudan's direct supervision and control. This was a type of job completely different from what he had been doing so far. To speak the least, it was quite demanding and taxing as it involved long stretches of touring to remote areas through an ill-developed communication system. But at the same time, it suddenly brought him face to face with that part of Orissa's rural life about which he was mostly unaware while living in the towns. In short, Madhusudan's innate sincerity, seriousness and intelligence all joined together to help him to rise upto the occasion and what followed was an extremely beneficial period for Orissa's

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education as a whole.

Whenever Madhusudan went to inspect the schools he had his own way of doing it. He never used to stand outside the classrooms looking at the teachers and the taught as detached objects of scrutiny. His habit was to get inside the classrooms and get involved in the activities. To find faults with the teachers and to chastise them whenever one could, had never been his practice. There had been many occasions when he used to take classes himself with a view to set up a model for the teachers to follow, to let them know that with necessary determination teaching can be much improved. Generally he was friendly to teachers and sympathised with their genuine difficulties, though for the dull and irresponsible he was unsparing . Then again he was equally concerned with the moral character of the students and insisted that in every school it should be properly looked into, and gave credit to teachers who could promote it well either by precept or advice. There was another dimension to his inspection. The Deputy Inspector in those days was an important Government official and his visit to the schools used to be considered as an important event by the villagers. Madhusudan often utilized his visit to establish a rapport with the villagers in getting them more interested and involved in the functioning of the schools. At the same time wherever he found them eager and enthusiastic, he used to help them to upgrade the schools.

Like Radhanath Ray, his superior in the office and a model to him in matters of inspection, Madhusudan found that to provide proper motivation to teachers in the far-flung village schools was an arduous job, and demanded a continuous alertness and vigil. Hence to acquaint them with the models of teaching methods he wrote a book entitled *Abadhāna-Bandhu* (Teachers' Friend, 1883), wherein among other things he stated his ideas about primary education— "To pump in as much knowledge as possible into the minds of the students is not the aim of primary education. For that there are higher-level schools. Those who have money, leisure and taste can go to such schools and acquire greater knowledge and be reckoned as scholars. But about ninety percent people in the society are extremely poor. They have no such power as to provide higher education to their children. But it is necessary that they should be given such education so that in later life they

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can use their own native intelligence and live in society in comparative comfort and honesty. This should be the aim of primary education. This is the first education. It should provide that without which one cannot manage, and without which one cannot acquire further knowledge."

IV

Madhusudan's continuing concern with teacher-training was again made manifest in 1886, when he took troubles to edit and publish an educational journal called *Sikhyābandhu* (Friends of Education) wherein he published articles on model-teacher and model-teaching as well as on model system of education. The journal in a way helped to forward and propagate the ideas of Madhusudan and his contemporaries on education and educational philosophy, and turned out to be extremely beneficial to the teachers as a whole. But Madhusudan's concern did not end there. With a view to create a community of ideal teachers he started a private Middle English school at Cuttack by his own efforts. It was started in 1881, and was called Cuttack Town School. The whole aim was to carry out experiments in education as he thought fit, independent of Government restrictions. He recruited bright young men sympathising with his views as Headmasters, two such being Biswanāth Kar and Bijoychandra Majumdar, who later became distinguished as men of letters. The school continued as a centre of excellence for many years and later, in 1889, was upgraded as a High School, though much later, due to financial difficulties, it was reverted to its first level.

Related to this professional job as an Inspector, Madhusudan took it upon himself to provide proper text books in Oriya to Lower, Upper and Middle schools — a very urgent need at the time. The books that were then used in the schools were mostly translated from Bengali, and apart from poor, uninteresting subject matter, they were often written in highly unidiomatic and distorted language. The books included collections in prose and poetry, translated from contemporary Bengali text books, such as, *Chārupātha, Padyamālā* and *Padyapātha* as well as books on history. There was also an Oriya dictionary, compiled by William Sutton, a missionary, in collaboration with a Bengali scholar,

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Bhubanānanda Nyālankār. It was a virgin field, and from the point of view of Oriya language and Orissa education, almost a national undertaking. It was an opportunity for Madhusudan to renew his initial efforts at Balasore, which he now did with much greater zeal and determination, again with able encouragement and support provided by Radhanath. The need to translate from Bengali was put by, and though the immediate need was to provide good, original text books in Oriya, the creative energy it unleashed led to Madhusudan's effective participation as a leading spirit in the creation of new Oriya literature in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Thus the text book writing was a need. But what emerged out of it was the powerful literary creation of a finely attuned, sensitive mind which looked at life with serenity and equanimity. Love for God, peace and happiness in nature, affection for children, and pride and respect for one's own country were some of the aspects of the emotional patterns that were woven into the poet's writings for the young, and their cumulative effect was such that they not only brought immense excitement to generations of young students (in fact, almost till Independence) but also when the students themselves grew into adulthood they carried the excitement into their own adult days.

While writing, and subsequently also while arranging the poems and prose pieces in the form of books, Madhusudan not only kept the different learning levels of the students in view, but also he had a good idea of what should be presented to the young minds by way of improving their morals and character. Thus *Chhāndamālā* (Garland of Rhymes) Part I, was meant for children of tender age, and the first poem entitled *Parameswar* (The Great Being) describes the child's love and respect for the Great Father in simple language—"Whatever I do, whatever I say, whatever I think/ He, the Great Master, the Great God, knows it always, every moment/And when I know He is always with me, day and night/I bow my head in perpetual delight." This sentiment is followed up in subsequent poems, a good example being *Sundar Sansār* (The Beautiful World). Apart from its text-book motivation, it equally appeals both to the child and the adult. It runs as follows:

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How beautiful is the sky!
And God created it,
The bright sun, moon, stars
Blue sea, green earth
The mountains, rivers, trees
God created them all.
The flowers and fruits of many colours
The soft green leaves of trees
Men, animals, birds
He who has no beginning created them all.
Wind at His command
Moves everywhere,
Fire at His command
Gives warmth and heat.
He is the ocean of mercy
Remember His glory.

Then there are other poems on morning, on evening, on seasons and change of seasons, and everywhere the recognition of His love and power is implicit. The purpose is, as one responds to nature's beauty, particularly as seen in one's immediate surroundings, he learns to appreciate the beneficial hand which is at the back of all beauty and glory. There are other feelings too, such as parental affection as in *Mo Janani*, and patriotic sentiments as in *Pruthibi Prati* (To the World) and *Janmabhumi* (Motherland). In every case the descriptions were simple and the rhymes were impeccable, and they freshened up the hearts of young boys and girls as was never done before.

Chhāndamālā Part II, was meant for relatively older students, and was prescribed for the higher classes. As before devotional sentiments provided an important stream particularly to endow young minds with love and devotion, and uplift their morals. A representative poem was *Staba* (Hymn) that subsequently became immensely popular, and almost became a household song in Orissa. It begins with a prayer to the Great Master :

Oh, Lord of my life
Master of all worlds
Great Parents, Knower of all

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We bow to your mercy
Oh, Sea of Grace — unparalled !

and ends with a quiet submission through love and truth :

Please take me in the path of Truth,
Let my soul float in your streams of Love,
Oh Master, to whom all submit
I submit my life at your feet.

But a young mind generally opens up to many matters. It gets excited and develops curiosity about various aspects of life, and responds to immediate realities around him. A careful writer takes note of these. Madhusudan did so. His third volume of poetry which was prescribed for still higher classes contained poems that aimed at developing a higher consciousness in the minds of young learners. It was entitled *Kabitabali* (Collection of Poems) and included reflective pieces such as *Sobhā* (Beauty), *Dhvani* (Sound), *Nisitha Chinta* and *Jiban Chintā* (Thoughts on Life) etc. There were prose books too, such as *Prabandhabali* and *Sāhitya-Kusum* (Blossoms of Literature) which had greater varieties as regards topics and subject matter in comparison to poetry. Whereas poetry remained largely confined to expressions of personal emotions and attitudes, in prose Madhusudan could be more free without any such restraint. He ranged freely over contemporary topics and wrote in a chaste, disciplined language which not only provided much-needed knowledge to students but also spurred their imagination and trained them in the fundamentals of style and rhetoric. For thousands of students in Orissa's schools at that time, the image of Madhusudan became one of a real, ideal teacher — the best and most respected, and for readers, a now powerful writer, a saviour of Oriya language and literature at a highly critical time, when the language ran the risk of being eliminated under serious adverse administrative and political conditions. That the Oriya language could hold its own and flourish, was largely due to persons like Madhusudan (as also Radhanath and Phakirmohan) who could bring single-minded devotion as well as extraordinary competence to the area he chose to work in.

In 1891 Madhusudan joined Ravenshaw Collegiate School, and within about 9 months was elevated to the gazetted rank. It

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was no doubt a recognition of his merit and hard work. But the school had one lacuna. It did not have an independent administration.Though the first Degree College of Orissa, Ravenshaw College, had started way back in 1878, it did not have any separate premises till then and was held along with the school section. Hence the college Principal remained in over-all charge of the institution and the school Headmaster had to work under him. This was a disadvantage, particularly for Madhusudan. The large amount of freedom which he used to enjoy as a Deputy Inspector, and which he so judiciously employed for experiments and innovations, was curtailed in the immediate, day to day working of the school management, where he had to carry out the orders of his superior. As such it would not have been such a difficult job considering Madhusudan's innate goodness and love for discipline. But the Principal of the college, one Mr. Holloyard, though basically a good man, was too strict a disciplinarian to temper his sense of discipline with practical considerations. Thus almost from the beginning Madhusudan found it hard to work with him. A serious situation arose on a trifling issue.

The Principal had ordered that the school gates would not be opened before 10.25 in the morning. Apparently the order looks simple and innocent. But the trouble arose from a practical consideration. As most of the students came from long distances by walking and were not scrupulously careful or even aware of the exact hour and minute, they preferred to turn up early so that they would be there when the classes begin. As a result a number of students used to come to the school much before 10.25, but had to wait at the gate in the hot sun for a considerable stretch of time. This was highly inconvenient and physically painful to a large number of young boys who had walked for long distances and needed a bit of rest before beginning the day's work. It so happened that out of exasperation, one day at night, some boys stole the key of the gate from the school office, and got the gate opened before 10.25 next day. The Principal took it as a serious breach of discipline, made an enquiry, caught hold of a large number of students irrespective of whether they were involved in the case or not, rusticated a number of them and demoted many others to the next lower class. The incident sparked off a public

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agitation, and immediately *Utkal Deepikā*, the most important newspaper of the day, wrote an editorial condemning the action of the Principal.

Madhusudan was unhappy. He could see that this was no issue. Besides he had to punish the students under orders which he did not personally approve. He was disturbed and made no secret of his disapproval. The difference of opinion led to misunderstanding and Holloyard thought Madhusudan's role as the Headmaster was not what it should be. While sending a report on the situation to the higher authorities he made a mention of Madhusudan's role and stated that he was a "very good teacher but a weak disciplinarian". In August, 1893, after 2 years as Headmaster at the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Madhusudan was transferred to Balasore as Deputy Inspector of Balasore district. It was a shock to Madhusudan as well as to his friends and admirers. *Utkal Deepikā* again wrote about it expressing shock and sorrow—"It is a matter of great regret that Madhu Babu could be transferred to Balasore under duress, as a measure of punishment given by his authorities, because he was conscientious and did not comply with the punishments meted out to the students.' But Madhusudan did not stay in Balasore for long. The authorities knew his worth, and he was transferred as a matter of official decorum. After about 3 months, when the Headmastership of Cuttack Training School fell vacant on the retirement of its Headmaster, Dwarakanath Chakravarty, Madhusudan was appointed in the same post and he joined on 26th October, 1893. Probably, in retrospect, one feels that it was a better appointment than the one he had as the Headmaster of the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. The job gave him necessary freedom and opportunity to further cultivate and improve upon the abilities which he had so successfully shown as the Deputy Inspector of Cuttack district. A competent man came to a job of his choice, and it was a job which most needed a man of his calibre. Mrutunjoy Rath (1882-1924), the first biographer of Madhusudan, referred to it as the beginning of 'Madhusudan Era' in the Training School.

V

In fact the condition of Cuttack Training School was in a bad shape. It was not only the only such school, in the Orissa Division, but a very important school too, as it trained teachers for the

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schools and in a way provided the foundation for Orissa's education. Its management as well as academic structure left much to be desired, and the informed local elite was most dissatisfied about it. The dissatisfaction was such that it had almost taken the form of a movement where the leadership was taken by Biswanath Kar, well-known educationist and litterateur who subsequently became famous as the editor of *Utkal Sāhitya*, probably the greatest literary journal ever edited and published in Orissa. Kar voiced the complaints very succintly in *Sambalpur Hiteishini*, a contemporary newspaper:

> Literature, Maths, Sanskrit, Geography, History — in fact all subjects are taught miserably. Only those students who pass their scholarship examinations come to this school for their teacher-training courses. But they repeat such literature lessons which they have already learnt in their schools. There is no analysis of their learning or knowledge. Maths are also taught likewise. About geography-lessons it is told that one day an intelligent student asked his teacher— 'Sir, it is written in the books that the world is in empty space and it revolves round the sun. But our *Purānas* tell us that it is still, and the great snake Bāsuki holds it in its head. Which is the real truth between the two?' The teacher gravely answered, 'You fool! Do the *Puranas* tell lies? What is written in the books is only to pass your examinations. Learn it by rote.

Kar made three demands — to appoint good, knowledgeable teachers; to select good text books; and to change the examination system. There were indications that the authorities considered Kar's complaints, and the first step in this direction was to appoint Madhusudan as the Headmaster of the School.

On appointment Madhusudan immediately realized the relevance of Kar's complaints. The situation was not only bad, but painfully bad. Whatever the reason may be, due attention had never been given to improve the quality of teaching in the school. As one thing was linked with another, the half-baked teachers who passed out of the school, in their turn caused a deterioration of the standard of teaching in the schools where they were appointed all over Orissa. Madhusudan put his first priority on the improvement

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of academic standard, and in this he was assisted by two very able teachers in the school, Chandramohan Maharana and Pandit Madhusudan Das. The changes were instantaneous as well as far-reaching, not only in the history of the Training School, but also indirectly in the areas of primary and middle-school education in Orissa.

One of the first things that Madhusudan did after joining the new post was to review all the books that were being used as text and to replace them wherever he found them wanting. He did not mind if the books were in Oriya or Bengali. His sole purpose was to choose such books as were basically good books, irrespective of whether they could be used as text books as such or not, because he thought the students needed adequate knowledge and mental expansion to equip themselves as good teachers. He himself was very well-read, and his whole effort was to pass on a part of his own range of knowledge to the students. Secondly, he tried to introduce new subjects. The existing subjects on which lessons were being given were Literature, Mathematics, Geography, History and Physics. He first of all improved the course-content of all these. In addition, in order to make the syllabus uptodate he recommended the introduction of Astronomy, Political Economy, Chemistry and Statistics and Dynamics. These involved much greater alertness and preparation on the part of the teachers and everybody was not fit for that. Hence Madhusudan himself took up a large part of the burden. He not only kept a strict vigil on whatever the teachers were teaching, but also gave the necessary coaching to the teachers in the new subjects as well as about the new methods of teaching whenever he could. Thus during the class hours Madhusudan was often seen moving from class to class, instructing the teachers on relevant points, or explaining difficult passages to the students, or even just taking a note of what was being done and how best that could be improved. When Chandramohan Maharana got a transfer to Puri, he took up Maharana's classes and started teaching Mathematics to the students himself working out the sums in the class along with the students. Similarly when he had to take the literature classes of somobodyelse's, he taught literature through extensive comparison of literatures of different languages, both from the East and

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the West. Likewise he taught Sanskrit, which he deeply loved, not through mechanical grammatical formulae which in fact invariably scared away the students, but through perceptive translations into Oriya through himself doing it and showing the example. Even in the drill-class if he found the students inattentive, he could be seen standing in a row along with the students going through the items of drill as per the drill-teacher's instruction. If the adage, practice is better than precept, had any meaning, Madhusudan illustrated it in the course of his duties as Headmaster. Both his colleagues and students were not so much afraid of him as a disciplinarian, because they all knew that he had basically a soft heart, but as an unsparing and serious teacher who did not tolerate even the slightest lacuna, and goaded them all to improve and to do better. Madhusudan's personality and involvement changed the very timber of work and created an all round enthusiasm for knowledge and enlightenment.

However, Madhusudan's major interest was in literature, and he wanted as many of his friends and students as possible to get involved in that. The atmosphere as well as the situation in the Training School provided a good opportunity to him to communalize his interest. With the active co-operation of some friends who shared his love for literature, in around 1894, he established a debating society in the school. Its purpose was to discuss matters related to literature, particularly Oriya literature, and its meetings were held every Saturday. Chandramohan Maharana was its first Secretary and he was often assisted in this work by Madhusudan Das. The Debating Society was the first of its type at Cuttack at that time, and slowly it gained an unprecedented popularity and credibility among the elites of Cuttack, many of whom evinced a keen interest in it and enthusiastically participated in its proceedings along with the students and teachers of the school. The discussions were free and open as well as wide-ranging and knowledgeable. Not only many new points about Oriya literature were made and debated, but also at the same time, the discussions initiated new springs of creative activity in many. Madhusudan guided the activities of the Society as its president for long nine years, till 1903, when on May 7, 1903, a new chapter was turned in the life of the Society. It transformed itself into a much larger

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body called 'Utkal Sāhitya Samāj' (The Literary Society of Orissa), in which form it exists even now, the oldest and one of the most important literary institutions of Orissa. Madhusudan took a leading part in framing its constitution as well as rules and regulations. On December 29th of the same year, its first General Body meeting was held and the Utkal Sahitya Samaj was officially launched. Madhusudan was its first President and continued as such till his death. He was also instrumental in getting a resolution passed by the Utkal Sammilani (Orissa Conference), the then largest political organisation of Orissa, in support of the Sahitya Samaj, in which substantial aid was promised to be given to the latter by way of promoting its activities, particularly compiling a history of Oriya language and literature and collecting and publishing ancient Oriya manuscripts.

A part of Madhusudan's energies at this time was also diverted towards the upliftment of Cuttack Town School, which he had started in 1881. His earlier attempt in 1889 to upgrade it had failed. After joining the Training School he once again renewed his efforts and finally in February, 1901, the Middle English School officially became a High English School and the first batch of students appeared at the Entrance Examination in 1902, out of whom 6 became successful, a remarkable first success. In fact Madhusudan's efforts towards this were motivated by a continuing need for such schools in Orissa, of which there were very few at the time, though the demand for such schools had gone on increasing. He could see how a large number of eager students, coming from different parts of Orissa, particularly from ex-feudatory state areas, were denied education due to either paucity of seats or paucity of funds. Considering Madhusudan's interest in education it was almost like a personal challenge to him, and the day (Monday, February 4, 1901) when the school was officially upgraded, was a memorable day for Madhusudan. The school was inaugurated in the first floor of a house near Madhusudan's residence in the presence of 11 teachers and friends. The blessings of the Almighty God were invoked, and Madhusudan's prayer on the occasion was as rich in content as touching emotionally. The school was renamed as Town Victoria High School (now it is named after Madhusudan, as 'Bhaktamadhu Bidyāpitha') in

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memory of Queen Victoria, who had passed away about a fortnight before (January 22, 1901).

The first batch of teachers included Nanda Kishore Bal, who later became a prominent poet, and Mrutunjoy Rath, who later got established as a critic, scholar and editor, and also Amrutānanda Ray, the son-in-law of Madhusudan's younger brother Jagannath Rao, who also worked as the Asst. Secretary of the school without any payment. The school was like a dream fulfilled for Madhusudan. He remained the President of the Managing Committee till his death, and often personally participated in teaching and in decisions about the curricula. He took care in choosing teachers and particularly Headmasters, and motivated the academic staff and students with an aura of idealism and dedication never heard of before in the context of Government schools. The school attracted a large number of students and was set on the road to become the best school in Orissa. But one difficulty almost dogged it from the beginning, that is, paucity of funds. This difficulty arose because Madhusudan from the beginning steadily refused any Government aid whatsoever, because he thought this would restrict the school's free and independent functioning. Secondly, he was almost extra liberal in admitting a large number of poor students without charging tuition fees. Yet with a strong determination he continued the school, and often contributed to the school's expenses from his own monthly income, along with whatever benevolent donations he received from the kings of the ex-feudatory states, such as Maharaja Sachidānanda Tribhuban Dev of Bamanda. But in spite of all odds the school flourished. As the student-strength increased, after a few years Madhusudan first shifted the school to his own residential premises at Kāligali, and then to a building of his brother Jagannath Rao, at Bānkā Bazar, where it ran till 1911, when it shifted to its own premises at Kāzi Bazar where it runs till now. Madhusudan retired from service in July, 1909, after which he devoted a large part of his energy to collect money for the school-building which he did by taking donations from all parts of Orissa, from the rich and the poor alike. The school's new building was opened on 2nd February, 1911, by the then commissioner of Orissa, Mr. Levinge. Madhusudan's thanks-giving prayer on the occasion, at the

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fulfilment of his 30 years labour, was an unforgettable memory for many who had attended the function. By the time Madhusudan died, the students' strength of the school had become 500.

VI

The poet Radhanath Ray's famous epic *Mahājātrā* (The Last Journey), the first of its type in Oriya and that too in blank verse, was published in 1896. Madhusudan wrote a three-page foreword to the book in which he expressed great appreciation for the work and wished that as the epic was incomplete (only seven cantos out of a projected 18 cantos were published) the poet should make haste to complete it so that with God's blessing it would 'illumine the temple of Oriya literature'. But the book suddenly became a bone of contention and was held up by the British-loyalists as preaching disloyality and sedition. The British sentiments had become vulnerable after 1857, and particularly so towards the last decade of the century, due to a rising awareness for freedom on the part of the Indians. Radhanath's book, as alleged, fitted into the atmosphere of discontent. The poem dealt with the Last Journey of the Pandavas and described how the Five Brothers and Draupadi after leaving Hastinapur toured some parts of India (including Orissa) before they came to the top of Sayadri hills in the Western Ghats, where with the help of Agni (The God of Fire) they were shown a future vision of India till the coming of the Muslims and the loss of India's independence at the hands of foreign invaders. The loss was both political and mental, where many of the age-old and traditional ways of living and approaches to life were replaced by expediency and selfishness. Particularly telling was the passage where the poet describes the coming of Kali (The Devil) with all his retainers such as Lust, Greed, Drunkenness, Idleness, Deception, Jealousy, Murder etc., who filled Bharatvarsha like Satan's innumerable followers inhabiting the earth after the Fall. But there were other passages which in a veiled way indicated the foreign rulers and expressed the desperate condition of the then India. Persons enemical to Radhanath fanned up the situation and brought charges of sedition against him before his authorities.

It was a serious matter. Radhanath, being a highly placed officer in the Government hierarchy, was asked to explain his

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conduct and brought upon himself the wrath of the British masters. The fall-out of the situation was that Radhanath had to bring out a revised 2nd edition of the poem, and had to destroy the rest of the cantos, that is, five cantos in the form of final manuscript and seven cantos in the form of first draft. It was a tragic event for Oriya literature as a whole, and it shocked many serious-minded people. Madhusudan was one such person. He came out openly in defence of *Mahajatra* and explained that the portions in the poem considered to be seditious were not really so. The poem had a much larger canvas, he pointed out, and it was concerned with the condition of man and the changing attitudes towards life, independent of the limitations of time and space. But Madhusudan's defence was not favourably viewed and a part of the official wrath was shifted to him.

Madhusudan got the first inkling of the Governmental disapproval in 1899 when Sir Alexander Pedlar, the then Director of Education of Bengal Presidency, visited the schools and colleges at Cuttack. In the course of his inspection, while visiting the Training School, he picked up many 'offical flaws' with Madhusudan's working and charged him for flouting official discipline. This went against the very grain of Madhusudan's character. He made a spirited defence and explained how, whatever he had done, was really towards the betterment of the school without any extra expense on the part of the Government. The atmosphere of suspicion and distrust continued for some time, and was not cleared till Pedlar came for a second visit later, and gave a clean chit to Madhusudan. Interestingly, that also brought an end to the *Mahajtra* controversy.

But Madhusudan had to face the ire of his senior officers in a different way. In 1900 Radhanath was transferred as Inspector of Burdhwan division and left Cuttack. One Jagabandhu Laha came in his place and when he left, an Englishman, Ruther by name, came as the Inspector of Schools for Orissa. From the start his behaviour was bad towards Madhusudan whom he tried to harass on petty matters. Whatever the reason may be Madhusudan was not accustomed to such behaviour from his superiors, and in fact, most of his superiors, in spite of difference of opinion at times, were generally courteous towards him, and often appreciated his

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many qualities of head and heart. Hence Ruther's behaviour was something unprecedented, and as time passed his discourtesy increased and so also Madhusudan's discomfiture. The matter almost came to a head at a point when Madhusudan thought of resigning from his service. This was evident from the letter (dated 14.1.1900) that he wrote to his eldest son-in-law, Bijoychandra Mazumder, at Sambalpur, which runs as follows:

> My dear, I have received your letter. As it is, my colic continues and makes me miserable. In addition, my current troubles have greatly added to my misery. The present Inspector Mr. Ruther is a strange creature. In the beginning he got a number of difficult jobs, such as annual reports, etc. done by me, and showed his appreciation of my work. Now as his interest clashes with my duty his manners have changed, and being flattered by a Muslim teacher of my school he now tries to interfere in my school work and harass me often on petty matters. Not that he can really do any harm to me. But the pity is I am to work under such a corrupt character. I have applied for three months' leave, and I am seriously thinking of taking voluntary retirement. You know my financial condition is awfully bad. Yet both my body and mind are completely unwilling to continue in such service.

But fortunately, the eventuality of premature voluntary retirement did not arise for Madhusudan. Mr. Ruther was transferred from Orissa after a short while, and Madhusudan was spared of serious mental worries. But interestingly, and which may be partly due to the image and personality Madhusudan had, Ruther could realize his mistakes, and before leaving Cuttack he went to Madhusudan's house personally and apologized for his misbehaviour.

While working as the Headmaster Madhusudan temporarily officiated for about 4 months (from January to 15 April, 1898) as the Joint Inspector of Schools for Orissa. But his first important promotion in office came in 1901, when he was promoted to the Seventh Grade of Bengal Education Service with a pay of Rs.250/- per month. In 1905, as per the new regulation he was promoted to the Sixth Grade with a pay of Rs.350.00 per month.

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In 1906, for about 4 months (from April to July) he temporarily officiated as the Inspector of Schools for Orissa. In 1907, (7th October) he was promoted to the Fifth Grade with a pay of Rs.400.00 per month, and at the same time, from 10th October, 1907 till March, 1908, he again officiated as the Inspector. For these few months he was elevated to the Indian Educational Service and got an extra allowance of Rs.100/- per month. From 14th March, 1908, Madhusudan was regularly appointed as the Joint Inspector of Schools and as the Inspector post was vacant, he remained in charge of that post for many months. In 1907 he was awarded the official title 'Rai Bahadur' in recognition of his excellent service for the cause of education in Orissa. He retired from service on 28th July, 1909. Thus officially a very distinguished career came to an end — the career of a man who had become a legend during his life time, and whom thousands of students and teachers all over the state had come to look upon as a father-figure, and whose books, taught in all the school-classes, trained generations of students in literary sensibility and high moral values. This is how Madhusudan Das, his one time colleague in the Training School, describes it in one of his farewell meetings held at Puri, "That day as we listened to his slow, and yet affectionate farewell words, all of us were immersed in great sadness. And when he bowed to friends and Brahmin pandits present in the audience, and took his seat with tearful eyes, the picture of humility and innocence in his handsome, radiant face was deeply impressed in all our hearts and would probably stay so always."

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Family Life, Social Life and Religious Belief

Madhusudan belonged to a large family. He was the eldest among 9 brothers and sisters, and he had 8 sons and daughters, besides another 8 sons and daughters belonging to his brothers and sisters. Then again he had a number of grandsons and grand daughters. In addition, a number of outsiders who stayed in the family doing various jobs, were taken care of almost like family members. Those were the days of joint-families when the head of the family was expected to look after the well-being of all the members of the family. This was an onerous duty, but Madhusudan discharged it with great care. His residential quarters at Kaligali in Cuttack, next to Radhanath Ray's residence, was situated on a sprawling ground of about 4 to 5 acres, and within itself, was almost like a mini-world. But what cemented this 'world' was Madhusudan's attitude towards the people who stayed inside it or came to stay there from time to time, an attitude of complete concern as well as love and affection for all. The poem *Paribār* (Family) which he composed in 1880-81, by way of advising children, illustrates the poet's attitude as a whole:

Who are as worthy as parents in this world?
He who can sacrifice his life in their service is great,
Their love, and whatever they do for us
Cannot be matched any where,
Remember them always
With love and respect.
Love your brothers and sisters
And please them always with sweet words,
Bow to seniors in the family
And obey them, respect them.
Be glad to carry out the words of superiors
And don't hurt any body.

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Ah, that house is like paradise
Where people love and respect each other.

Elsewhere, in a poem composed after 1908, he directly addressed the householder to conduct his life in the family with a concern for virtue and goodness, and with love and affection for all the members:

Oh, householder! be steeped in virtue, in wisdom,
And submit all your actions as offerings
before Him, the great God.
A householder should always take care of
his wife, his children,
He should do good to his relatives and friends,
The sons and daughters to be educated with care,
All to partake with the wisdom of Dharma,
And the tenets of Dharma should strengthen the family.

In fact, a strong aspect of Madhusudan's character, which grew out of his total attitude towards life, was his total involvement in the family — not a sentimental or indulgent involvement, but an involvement where strong bonds of affection were coupled with equally strong concern for virtue, discipline and religious faith . He lost his mother very early in his life whom he commemorates in his poem *Mo Janani*, quoted earlier. His step-mother, who was almost his own age, also did not live long. She died when her youngest son was only four-years old. But his father lived long, till 82, and died in May, 1909, about two months prior to Madhusudan's retirement from service. He dedicated his *Chandamala* Second Part, to his father and wrote— "This small volume is offered with worshipful obedience at the lotus-feet of my father, who is the repository of all holiness and whom I greatly respect and revere." Subsequently while writing to his brother about his father's death, he wrote as follows— "While completely engrossed in himself, in great tranquillity, sometimes alone, or sometimes along with me, he continuously took the name of God, or chanted *slokas* from the *Geeta*, till about 5 or 6 minutes before his death. While singing the songs of God in great delight, at about half past ten, quietly and most gracefully, he crossed the sea of life. Those bright, radiant eyes closed. Only the lips remained slightly

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parted as if to utter once again the name of God. This way our father went away in happiness. Why should we grieve unnecessarily. Let His wish be fulfilled!" And again after about 2 months - "Whatever we have achieved, it is only through our father's blessing. Whose affection in this world is more blessed and beneficial than our father's? Alas, we did not understand its value while he was alive. The consolation is, even though he is no more, we are really not away from him. By God's grace he appears as most intimate now. Being the representative of the Great Father, and while staying in the lap of the Great Father, how he looks at us with eyes of what beauty and affection!" Bhagirathi Rao was a highly religious-minded man and a man of discipline, which virtues Madhusudan inherited from him. He himself always attended to his father physically, like a servant, and was extremely careful to see that in no way he was inconvenienced during his daily routine, whenever he used to come to Cuttack from Puri on visits to his children and grand-children. Madhusudan's respect and attachment to his parents provided a main plank of his character and as Abanti Devi, his grand-daughter, points out later, was both 'touching' and 'inspiring'.

The same bonds, probably with greater intensity on the part of Madhusudan, were also extended to his younger brother Jagannath, for whom he had developed great concern since the days they lost their mother. Jagannath was two years younger than Madhusudan and outlived him by about seven years (he died in 1919). But so long Madhusudan lived, his affection for the younger brother continued unabated, almost like a mother's love for her child, irrespective of whether Jagannath stayed at Cuttack or stayed away from Cuttack, which often happened due to the exigency of the jobs he did. In one of his letters to his brother, Madhusudan wrote— 'What wealth you are to me I can't express that in language. And do I not know with what eyes you look up to me? What else should I write? My only prayer is, let the Great Father keep both of us closely bound and intimately concerned about the blessings of His lotus-feet.' Subsequently when Jagannath completed his fiftieth year. Madhusudan wrote a poem entitled *Asirbād* (Blessings) wherein he invoked God's grace on Jagannath and reaffirmed his own continuous love and affection for him.

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Madhusudan's concern for his wife was equally touching. At the age of 12, he was married to Champa, as mentioned before, the 9-year old daughter of Balaramjee, who was later renamed as Padma Bai. As per the prevailing custom she came to the husband's house after a few years, after attaining puberty, and then for about 44/45 years till Madhusudan's death (she died in 1935, at the age of 80) they lived together in great mutual love and intimacy, sharing together in equal measure the responsibility of a growing family, as well as the pleasures and burdens of happiness and adversity respectively, and came to be known and respected as one of the most ideal couples of the time, to be talked of and imitated. Madhusudan's early reference to his wife in the sequence of poems entitled *Jaubanar Swapna* is remarkable both for what it says as well as for its unusualness in the total ouvre of Madhusudan's poetry. The feelings of delight and happiness can be unmistakably seen in the poem along with a strong romantic instinct for beauty and youthfulness — "Startled, I suddenly saw/The young beauty before me/The face like soft lotus/ And soft tresses over the face/ Dark and loose/And the white moonshine/Like a thin cloth over her body/....Life of my life/Silent, shy/I knew her in a minute/And taking her in my arms/Said, Love, this life is yours." Madhusudan rarely repeated this feeling afterwards. But his deep love and attachment for his wife remained like a pole-star throughout his life and brought innumerable blessings to all around.

Madhusudan's affection for his children was also legendary. As the head of the family his quota of love for other members was more than what other members could give him. His own poetic declaration that, that house is like a paradise where members have deep love and respect for each other, was more than justified in his case and in the case of his family. Once while touring ex-feudatory State areas as a part of his official duty, he wrote an interesting letter addressed to his sons, daughters, nephews and nieces jointly. It begins with the names of his children,

Saraswati, Krushnā, Shānti, Prasānta, Sāntwanā,
Be happy, I pray to God.
The kind God will aid me
And I will go where Bāsanti stays;

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So many beautiful scenes I see
So many hills, rivers, trees — so graceful!
And we cross mountains delightedly
And we remember Him who has created all.
Remember Him, pray to Him.
Daily — morning, evening.
Do not forget Him, never forget Him,
Saraswati, Krushna, Shanta, Prasanta, Santwana.

Elsewhere he was in the habit of writing to his children individually often participating in their respective joys and suffering. Thus he was greatly shocked when his eldest daughter Basanti lost her first two children untimely, one after another. When her third child was born, a daughter, and she did not become a casualty, there was great joy in the family. In his happiness, Madhusudan composed a poem (1895) naming the child, and sent it to his son-in-law, Bijoychandra, who was staying at Sambalpur (in western Orissa) at that time. Some portions of the poem which was in the form of a prayer ran as follows :

Not with physical eyes, but with eyes of love
I have seen her,
A gift of your kindness, Mother, this daughter,
I am yet to hear her lisping tongue
But it vibrates, Oh Mother, in the chords of my heart.

The child lived long, and was named, as Madhusudan wished, as 'Suneeti', meaning good principles and good manners.

Madhusudan's second daughter Abanti's only son Amarnath was born at Cutttack in 1902, and a few months after when she went back to her husband's place in Calcutta, Madhusudan wrote a letter to her which expressed his great love for the child :

My dear daughter,

Let me first talk about the little boy. For about four or five days after you left, I was intensely aware of the child's absence in the house. Now that painful sensation is over. I can see the child's handsome face and listen to his sweet laughter in memory. I don't know when I can see him again. Let the great Benefactor protect him always!

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But when his eldest son Jayanta's eldest child, a son, died when he was only 6 month's old, Madhusudan's sorrow was as deep as inconsolable. In a reply to Abanti's letter at this time he wrote (1910) :

My dear daughter,

I have received your letter. My eyes were filled with tears as I read it. During these few days I had only one vision — the vision of that god-gifted child's figure and face. As if his pair of dark eyes are radiating pure, unalloyed peace and happiness. I cannot see him any more with my physical eyes. But let God grant, that his bright holy face may stay in my memory always and lead me towards that Great Holiness and Great Beauty eternally.

Madhusudan was not only fond of his own grand-children, he was equally fond of the children of his nieces, Rebā and Saṛaswati, his brother Jagannath's daughters. Particularly Reba's only daughter Inā(Indira) was very fond of her grand-father, and on one occasion Madhusudan composed a poem in a lighter vein for all the three children of Reba — Rabi, Ina and Phutan.

Rabi, Ina, Phutan
Ride a phaeton
Eat egg mutton
Says Madhusudan.

But in spite of all his playfulness with children Madhusudan also desired that they should learn to whatever extent they could. Thus once when Abanti's son Amarnath, who was about 6/7 at that time, asked his grand-father to give him a note book so that he would write sums, Madhusudan gave it to him along with a poem which he composed on the spot. The poem was as follows :

What should you write, oh child,
In this new Khata?
Write good things, good tales.
What is good tale, good story?
That which shows imagination, talent.
What is imagination, what is talent?
I will tell you what they are —

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Imagination creates new matters daily,
And talent adds colours, not one but many.

Madhusudan's family was not only a 'mini-world' but a compact world. His use of the word 'paradise' was only an idealistic expression of that. But the intense human touch as well as the sweet and bitter juice of mortal life with which it was full, probably 'paradise' never had. Madhusudan's own jest for life as well as his own seriousness about living, provided the essential substantiality to his family of which he remained as the king-pin till his death, and even after death as a strong invisible influence for many, many years.

In addition to the close bonds he had with his children, Madhusudan was particularly careful to give them proper and adequate education. At the first instance they all went through the usual schooling, though the girls had to discontinue after the middle English stage, as there were no provisions for them to continue further. But their education did not stop there. They were provided opportunities at home to get better versed in Oriya, Bengali, Sanskrit and English. Thus classics in Sanskrit and English were brought in and taught to the children by competent teachers, including Madhusudan himself. But for Oriya and Bengali, children were encouraged to read by themselves with occasional help from Madhusudan and other elders, for which a large number of books and journals in those two languages were purchased as soon as they were published.

Abanti Devi, who later wrote a biographical account of her father and his times, wrote about her parents, particularly about Madhusudan, very succinctly :

> Madhusudan was his father's eldest son. He took up the responsibility of the family at the age of 18, and since then he continuously tried to lessen the load on his father. He got his younger brothers educated and got them established in life. He gave his sisters in marriage and always tried to keep them happy and contented. It will not be out of place here to mention how my mother too shared all my father's responsibility with great delight and eagerness. After my father's death and till the last day of her life, she as it were carried out my father's wishes,

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and looked after all the members of the big sprawling Rao family with equal concern.

And again, remembering Madhusudan :

> Madhusudan's life was as full of sweetness and grace on the one hand as brightness and illumination on the other. As the stream of immortal sweetness of love flowed in the life of this lover, so also every body close to him could feel the sharp impact of his radiant life given to truth, honesty and justice. His one desire in life was how best he could direct the lives of his children in the path of that bright radiance. There is no counting in how many ways or in how many forms he was trying to give a shape to his one desire in the lives of his children.
>
> Madhusudan's daily life was attuned to his own ideal. Getting up in the early hours of the morning till he used to go to bed at night, it was a continuous cycle of activities, both physical and mental, which included his work in the office during day-time or work in the garden in the afternoon as well as the time when he entertained his friends or talked to his sons and daughters or read books which included classics as well as modern authors in about half a dozen languages (Sanskrit, English, Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi) or taught the grand-children. All these, in addition to the time earmarked in the morning and evening for singing devotional songs along with other members of the family, or praying along with them quietly in the prayer-hall, or writing his own songs and poems. In short, if an individual's life can be taken as providing a beacon light to the collective-living, Madhusudan's was such a life in its routine schedule, full of love, knowledge and action all eombining in such balance and cohesion as could be seen in few other persons.

II

Madhusudan's personal traits as exhibited within his family also extended to people outside the family. His teachers, friends, juniors as well as colleagues in the office, domestic helpers at home, innumerable acquaintances who came and stayed with him however temporarily, to the extent of completely unknown people

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who came to him for casual help, all were sprinkled and soaked by the spray of love and affection that never ceased gushing out of him till his death. His close friend, Pearymohan, died early and Madhusudan could never forget the loss. Another person who was equally close to him was Radhanath. Both Radhanath and Madhusudan built their houses side by side at Cuttack and the bond that existed between the two persons extended for all purposes to both the families. Radhanath died on April 16,1908, at night, in his residence at Cuttack, when Madhusudan was away at Puri, on the occasion of the 5th Conference of the Utkal Union. The news of Radhanath's death reached Puri early in the morning next day, and spread in the town like wild fire. The moment Madhusudan got the news he got into a room and closed the door, and never came out throughout the day to attend any of the deliberations of the Conference. The next day he wrote a letter to Sashibhusan, Radhanath's eldest son, as follows:

> My dear son,
>
> After getting the news I'm lying here helpless, as if thunder-struck. I wonder what he was not to me! Alas, I could not put my head at his feet at the last hour. What a sinner I am! I was not privileged to get a touch of that holy feet at the end...

Immediately after he returned to Cuttack and observed the post-death rituals along with the family members of Radhanath. Subsequently in a poem that he composed on Radhanath he referred to him as his 'greatest benefactor in life' who was for him 'a father, mother, teacher and friend'.

Madhusudan's relationship with Phakirmohan Senapati, was equally cordial. Phakirmohan came from Balasore, and after having served at different places in Orissa, he came to settle at Cuttack at a later age. In age he was older to Madhusudan, and hence Madhusudan's children looked up to him as their father's elder brother—almost as a close member of the family. Even Phakirmohan's two children (son, 13 and daughter, 11) after the death of his second wife, came and stayed in Madhusudan's family for about a year when Madhusudan supervised their studies and well-being. Phakirmohan was always eager to know whenever Madhusudan wrote anything new and he used to avail himself of

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the first opportunity to come to his house to congratulate him, Madhusudan was all praise for Phakirmohan's creative power, particularly for his work on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Phakirmohan had also great deal of respect for his younger friend, not only as a man ("If you want to see an ideal man/Rush, take a look at Madhu Rao")) but also as a fine writer ("When will Madhu's place be filled up/No body knows/In how many years/ Only God can tell").

Apart from these celebrated co-writers, Madhusudan was equally concerned about his friends, some of whom were much younger in age. There were his class-mates, such as Bhagabati Charan, Bipracharan, and Balarām Das who were almost like members of his family, and it is recorded how, whenever they visited his house, Madhusudan, as if, got back to younger days, and the time was spent in great pleasure and happiness. When in 1906 both Bhagabaticharan and Bipracharan died suddenly, within an interval of about 2 weeks, it was a great shock to Madhusudan and he left sleep and food for many days.

Of the younger friends particular mention may be made of Sādhucharan Roy, Biswanath Kar, Raghunāth Singh and Akhaykumār Roy. Sadhucharan got married to Jagannath Rao's eldest daughter, but he died early at 37, in 1898. The others outlived Madhusudan by many years and Madhusudan's as well as his family's link with them was extremely cordial and intimate. Biswanath Kar particualrly, considered Madhusudan almost like his father and behaved with him with the respect and concern due to one's own father. When Biswanath's two brothers, Bholanāth and Lokanāth, died untimely, Madhusudan's letter of consolation to him expressed how greatly he himself was affected by the loss. On the part of Biswanath, he wrote a moving obituary on the death of Madhusudan. It said, "Madhusudan was our Guru in all matters — knowledge, action, religion, literature — Guru and greatest benefactor. What we owe him cannot be repaid, cannot be expressed, our lives are indebted to his immortal love."

Madhusudan's munificence was as genial as the sun's. It extended to all, irrespective of the position one occupied in the society. Thus the gardener who looked after his landed property at Bhubaneswar, on his retirement was given a monthly pension

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of Rs. 6.00 so long he lived. Similarly the old servant at Cuttack, one Nanda Behera, was not only given an old-age pension after he became infirm, but in a changed role, he was often invited to the house where women took pains to cook special dishes for him. Then again, sights such as Madhusudan embracing his servant and crying like a child because of some mishap in the latter's house, were not infrequent. Besides, people associated with his family in a routine manner, such as the old woman supplying milk to the family, or the mason who looked after the repairs of the house, either treated Madhusudan as their father or brother or son and were equally treated in return and taken care of. On one occasion, when a young married woman from a nearby village across the river Kathajodi, ran away from her father-in-law's house due to some misbehaviour, and was accidentally brought to Madhusudan, he took her back to her father-in law's place, and the illiterate villagers had so much respect for him that they unhesitatingly took her back in the family in spite of very serious social stigma that got attached to her due to her truancy. Such tales were plentiful. Madhusudan's concern and benignity were frequently talked about in the town.

Differently, one may also record Madhusudan's friendship with Rabindranath Tagore. Probably the association began from 1893, when Tagore had came to Cuttack in the course of his inspection of his landed estates. Subsequently when Madhusudan's poem *Rushiprane Debabatarana* was translated into Bengali and published as *Rishichitra* (The Portrait of a Rishi) in *Sādhanā*. Tagore wrote an appreciative review, and pointed out how it gave a bright, glorious picture of ancient India and conveyed a new taste and emotion. They had correspondence with each other and Madhusudan used to visit Tagore in Calcutta whenever he got an opportunity. On invitation from Tagore he went to Santiniketan in 1911, and his subsequent entry in his diary (in English) about Rabindranath showed his deep appreciation of the latter, "Rabi Babu is no mere poet and writer only. He has become a true saint (Rishi). His humility and faith, his single-hearted devotion to the work of 'Brahmacharyasram', his simple, beautiful life impressed me as few lives have done, 9.3.1911." In fact Madhusudan had a cordial relationship with a number of contemporary Bengali

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writers. It was partly because of his eminence as a Brahmo-leader, but largely because of his very affectionate personality and liberal attitude towards life, that people all around could love and respect him. Whenever he was in Calcutta at the time of annual Brahmo festivals, he was often invited to act as the 'Acharya' in the mass-prayer meetings in preference to many others. Once he even presided over a very important meeting of the Brahmo Society in Calcutta and was hailed as one of the pillars of the Brahmo Samaj. When the Andhra Theistic Conference took place in Madras he was invited to be its President. Subsequently when it was proposed to have an All-India Conference at Varanasi, along with the All-India Congress, he was invited to preside. Yet again, in 1912, when this Conference took place at Bankipur, Patna, he was requested to be its President. Unfortunately Madhusudan could not keep any of these invitations as he was increasingly getting ill all the time, though he had partly composed his Presidential Addresses, in one or two cases.

III

Madhusudan's father was a highly religious-minded man, and Madhusudan inherited this quality from his father. It has been pointed out how much he was given to prayer and worship, to the extent of experiencing spiritual visions, during his early childhood days. But the frame-work of his religious belief, like his father's, was well within the tenets of traditional Hinduism and Hindu rituals. While at Cuttack he came in contact with Haranath Bhattacharya, a man of strong character who meticulously followed Brahmo ideals. Madhusudan was much influenced by him. Particularly the message of universalism as embedded in Brahmo Dharma as against the limited ritualistic nature of idol worship, inspired him and led him to a new awakening about religion. In due course it occupied his whole being, as a result of which he not only accepted Brahmo Dharma but organized his life as per Brahmo ideals and habits of meditation, and finally emerged as the most important personality on the Brahmo Samaj in Orissa.

Brahmo dharma for Madhusudan became a matter of great conviction. That well-known *sloka* which Kesub Chandra had made out as the basic tenet of Brahmo dharma — *Subisalamidam*

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biswam pabitram brahma mandiram/Chetah sunirmalan tairtham satyam sastramana swaram/Biswaso dharmamulam hi pretih paramasandhanam/Swarthanasasta bairagyam brahmayirebam prakirtyate, — became the inspiring ideal for Madhusudan and regulated his life's activities. Initially Madhusudan's father who was a staunch Hindu was unhappy at the son's conversion and tried to win him back to Hinduism. But as Madhusudan was firm in his conviction, Bhagirathi Rao permitted him to have his own way but continued as before with the same amount of love and affection for his son. Subsequently Madhusudan's wife, and his brother Jagannath Rao and his wife also joined him, as also a large number of young people who were inspired by his life and ideals. In fact, Madhusudan's religiousness became a rallying point for many in which the guiding principles were knowledge, work and meditation which alone, Madhusudan maintained, can advance man to a new awakening of perfection. At a later stage, while writing about Madhusudan after his death, Nanda Kishore Bal (1878—1928), the famous contemporary poet and novelist, wrote as follows (*Utkal Sahitya,* 1912):

> Madhusudan's special quality was that he worked in many fields and everywhere he achieved eminence. But his main concern was to practice religion and propagate it, and as means to it he devoted his time to acquire knowledge, to spread education and to reform social habits. Even routine activities such as looking after the family and the guests as well as his general welfare activities, were a part of his comprehensive attitude towards religion. The ideals of his religious life were knowledge, work and meditation, and the combination af all three in the final realization of a universal life .... We have seen him in many ways. But what has always remained vivid in my mind is a portrait that Brahmo temple is decorated with plentiful flowers and leaves, and that inside that arbour, like a bright resplendent *rishi,* Madhusudan sitting and chanting in a resounding voice that holiest of all hymns *srunantu bisıve amrutasya putra.*

Madhusudan lived for about 60 years. When he was around 30/35 he was attacked by colic, which increased in intensity as he

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grew older. After 50 it frequently attacked him and in spite of all treatment it continued unabated. He retired from government service in 1908 at 56. But all along he continued to do his work, and particularly after retirement the pace of his work increased and he never allowed any rest to himself. On 15th December, 1912, his illness became acute and he took to bed. For 14 days he fought with illness and death, and finally in the early morning of 28th, surrounded by innumerable friends, well-wishers and relatives, the great soul passed away, silently and peacefully. Only at the end he was conscious for a moment, and asked his son Sukānta to open the windows so that he could have more light and air. The news of his death spread quickly in the town and people from all walks of life came and accompanied his bier. He was cremated at Sati Chaurā, the ground hallowed by the graves of writers and leaders. On Sunday morning, 5th January, 1913, a memorial service was held at Madhusudan's spacious house at Kaligali, where among others, Pandit Sibanath Sastri from Calcutta, paid rich tributes to Madhusudan and compared him to a light-house whose beacon-light guided people in the turbulent sea of sin and temptation unerringly. He was illuminated and his contact illumined all others.

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Literary Works

Madhusudan's pre-eminence as an educationist and educational-administrator never overshadowed the other, and probably more important aspect of his career — his role as a creative writer. We have seen how, thanks to Radhanath, he was fascinated by the Muse from his very early days and again, thanks to Radhanath, how his interest in litereture continued unabated till his death. There were different dimensions no doubt, such as the contemporary socio-educational needs to have new text-books in Oriya, or the motivations from the later 19th century patriotic atmosphere, or even his own meditative-contemplative mind that linked him at a religious plane with the Upanishads on the one hand, and the Brahmo dharma on the other. But on the whole, the creative spirit ranged freely and widely, and along with Radhanath and Phakirmohan, Madhusudan came to be considered as the third major figure to effect radical change in taste and sensibility in the later 19th century Oriya literature. He was both a poet and a prose-writer. But it was in poetry that he excelled and came to be respected and admired as a poet of great power and imagination.

The first-ever poetry-collection of Madhusudan was published in 1876, when he was 23. It was published from Cuttack where he had been transferred a year earlier from Balasore. The volume, entitled *Kabitabali, Pratham Bhāga* (Poems, First Part) contained, among others, the poet's first-ever poem *Smasana.* A slightly enlarged edition of the book entitled as *Kabitabali, Dwitiya Bhaga* (Poems, Second Part) came out after about 8 years, in 1884, where in addition to the poems published earlier, a few more pieces were added. Thematically the poems had a good range—from a reflective mode (*Jiban Chinta,* Thoughts about Life; *Nisitha Chinta,* Thoughts at Midnight) to responsiveness to nature (*Sarat Pravāt,* An Autumn Morning) and hymns to God, as

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well as patriotic sentiments related to contemporary conditions of India and the Indians.

The poet's second collection of poetry, entitled *Chhandamala, Pratham Bhaga* (Rhymes, First Part), was published in 1881 and a second, enlarged edition of the same book came out after 12 years, in 1893. Subsequently *Chhandamala, Dwitiya Bhaga* (Rhymes, Second Part) came out in 1898. The volumes together contained about 30 poems, and as in the first collection, they exhibited different moods — reflective, moralistic, nationalistic, devotional as well as sensitiveness and alertness to nature's beauty. Particularly, his six poems on six seasons (Spring, Summer, Rains, Autumn, Early Winter and Winter) have even now remained as a unique group in Oriya poetry. So too, his poem on motherland, entitled *Janmabhumi,* and his poem in praise of Great God, entitled *Staba,* have become household items, sung and recited in innumerable homes and occasions. In addition, the group of short moralistic poems such as on family, companionship, good manners and education etc., which are like pieces of hard, bright gems, have become the mental-treasure of the nation. Again there are two fine retellings from mythology, one related to the banishment of Ramchandra from Ayodha, and the other to the death of Karna at Kurukhetra. On the whole, the poems in fine musical metres, brought a distinct flavour and freshness which have not paled even now.

Sangeetamālā (The Garland of Songs) was published in 1896. It contained 104 songs in different metres meant to be sung on different occasions of the Brahmo Samaj. But apart from the need, the poems were fine devotional pieces meant to instil a love of God on the hearts of the listeners. The poet's dedication, in chaste Oriya prose, runs as follows:

> In those eternal, and eternally-palatable feet, where divinely-flavoured holy songs of celebration, like divine-garlands of god like rishis, whose devoted hearts gush out in great ecstasy, are offered, I, who am immersed in the miserable dust of this earth, offer these few, flavourless songs from a dry, devotionless heart, towards the same eternally-beautiful, universally acclaimed lotus-feet.

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The next volume, entitled *Basanta Gatha* was published in 1902, and contained poems written between 1895 and 1902, all sonnets and sequence of sonnets, the first-ever such a book in Oriya in that particular form. The poet pointed out that as most of the sonnets were written during the spring-time he called them 'Songs of Spring', and he dedicated the book to Sri Sachidananda Dev, the Crown-Prince of Bamandā, an important the then feudatory State in Western Orissa. But interestingly the poems did not have spring or celebration of spring as their theme. Only one poem in a total 27 poems that the book contained, directly referred to the spring in as much it was entitled 'A Spring Full-Moon Midnight' and expressed the poet's happiness and excitement on the occasion. The poems, as in earlier volumes, showed different moods of the poet. Thus there were eulogical portraits of persons he knew and respected, such as Radhanath Ray, Phakirmohan Senapati, Gaurisankar Ray, and Sir Sudhal Dev, the King of Bamanda, and an obituary for his friend Pearymohan Acharya. Then there were poems that expressed the poet's strong personal emotions related to love, happiness and remorse. Some such poems were *Atita* (The Past), *Hrudaya Sangita (*The Song of the Heart), *Kaunasi Paralokabāsini Prati* (For a Lady who is no more), *Jaubanar Swapna* and *Jarā Ākramana* (The Attack of Old Age). Then there was an interesting poem, entitled *Patitā Ramani* (The Fallen Woman) which showed the poet's social motivation. In addition, there were a number of poems, devotional and reflective in nature, such as *Sankhadhwani* (The Sound of Conch), *Satya* (The Truth), and *Parama Pramana* etc. which exhibited a delicate, mystical perception on the part of the poet. There were other feelings too. In one poem, entitled *Nababarsha* (The New Year) the poet welcomed the new year (1898), and in at least two other poems, *Sri Panchami* and *Ekāmra Kānan* (Bhubaneswar) one could sense the poet's strong nationalistic feelings related to the distressing socio-political conditions of the time. On the whole, apart from the range and variety, the poems continued the image of Madhusudan as a poet of power and newness — almost by that time as an elder poet to be revered and respected.

Next year, that is, in 1903, the poet had two more poetry-collections, published more or less simultaneously. The first was

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Utkal-Gāthā (The Songs of Orissa) that contained 12 poems in praise of 'Mother Utkal' or Orissa, in absolutely glowing terms. Some of these poems were composed to be sung in the meetings of Utkal Sammilani, the Association that was formed towards realization of separate Orissa province and had its first meeting in 1903. Appropriately the book was dedicated to Sri Madhusudan Das, the moving spirit behind the Association, and the most important and most respected political leader of the time, who subsequently came to be recognized as the builder of modern-Orissa. The second was entitled *Kusumānjali* (Flower Offerings), the poet's most well-known and most talked-of volume. It contained 11 poems and was dedicated to the poet's greatest friend and benefactor, Radhanath Ray. The poems were *Naba Basanta Bhabana, E Srusti Amrutamaya He* (The World is full of Nectar), *Nabajugar Abhiseka* (The Incarnation of New Age), *Āashā* (Hope), *Ātmasamarpana* (Self-Sacrifice), *Bhārat Bhābanā* (Thoughts about Bharat), *Rusiprane Debabatarana* etc. The poems have the usual range—nationalistic, devotional, reflective, as well as a sensitive response to nature's beauty, and a strong mystic perception, probably most eloquently pronounced in *Rushiprane Debabatarana.* The power and maturity as exhibited in the poems, established Madhusudan as a major poet, at par with Radhanath.

Kusumanjali, in a general way, marked the acme of Madhusudan's creative powers. Not only his pace slackened thereafter but few poems written after *Kusumanjali* could rise up to that but standard. Probably one exception was *Himāchal Udaya Utsab* (The Celebration of Dawn in the Himalayas) which was published in 1911, one year before his death. It is, in fact, a long poem of 158 lines, and deals with one theme, that is, the poet's reaction to the rise of dawn in the Himalayas — a poem that compounds an account of the beauties of nature with the poet's reflective and devotional mood, finally rising to a mystical perception of the whole universe. It was a fine poem, and often equated with the earlier *Rusiprane Debabatarana* for sheer power of language and poetic imagination. Two other elegies written during this period may be mentioned. One was on Maharshi Debandranath Tagore in 1907, and the other on Maharaja Sri

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Ramchandra Bhanja of Mayurbhanja (1912). They were two fine pieces in that particular form in Oriya.

Smasana, the earliest poem of the poet, was said to have been written at the age of 20. It begins with an account of a pleasant evening on a sea-shore with reference to the rising moon and the moonlight playing on the waves—"The world is excited at the moon's light/So like nectar/ The wind blows slowly/So full of fragrance/And the heart goes wild/As the blue sky embraces the blue-diamond sea". But slowly the sensation changes as the poet sees the cremation ground on the sea-shore and is seized by its fearful sight ("Innumerable bones and skulls whiten the place/ And piles of ashes and burning pyre—awful!/And jackals bark monstrously/And eat the corpses in cruel glee"). This is followed by recollection of those who are no more with him — his mother, so good and loving, his sister, like a young, budding flower, and the relatives and teachers whom he loved and respected. But finally this also passes and the poet's mind travels to meditate on the temporariness of life, how everybody, irrespective of whatever he might have done, ends at the cremation ground, and how death is the greatest leveller that levels all, irrespective of one's position or status or pride or beauty or even innocence.

Nothing is eternal - everything passes off,
The life, the beauty, the richness —
Like drops of water on lotus leaf;
The king and the subject, the fool and the wise,
the poor and the rich,
All are equal before the cruel Death.

Death haunts all,
And all are pushed to cremation ground
Leaving all.

The tone is explicit. That which begins with an appreciation of beauty, in a pleasant mood, ends with an overpowering consciousness of death, along with a serious consideration of life's realities and purposes. The context was of course Puri's famous cremation-ground (called Swargadwar) but it could have been any cremation-ground anywhere. But what was more relevant was the

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meditative habit and a meditation on life's futility which anticipated an important element in the future thoughts of the poet.

Two companion-pieces were *Nisitha Chinta* and *Jiban Chinta,* which were written later, around 1880. The former, like *Smasana,* begins with an awareness of the night's beauty — the moon, the quiet sea, and the moonlight falling like dew-drops. The sleep fills everywhere — the sea, the mountain, the luxurious palaces, the lonely forest, and people dream in happiness, in temporary forgetfulness of their owes. Sleep, moonlight, tranquillity — the gooddess of peace reigns all around. All that prompt the poet to think of the great divine being who creates, and who provides resolution to all human actions :

How long will you forget yourself
in this land of tranquillity?
How long will you be charmed with this life?
If you wish for eternal happiness
In this world of agony, suffering
Follow the path of religiousness —
Submit yourself to the divine being.

The latter also continued the thought of *Smasana,* but finally went beyond it, to a deeper and more serious consideration of life's strength and modalities. It begins with thoughts of life's temporariness, that is, how every aspectof life inevitably runs to an end and is swallowed up in final annihilation that ends with death. Nothing avails — neither beauty, nor courage, nor pride, nor wealth, nor happiness or unhappiness. The man should, first of all, be aware of this inevitability.

Oh my soul, wake up
Open your eyes and see
How quietly runs the stream of life
To meet the monstrous waves of the sea of death.
Like dreams in a sea of sleep
All your pride, wealth, anger
Rise and vanish like bubbles,
The cruel jaws of time swallow everything.

Man's so called happiness is short-lived — he feels elated tempo-

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rarily only to be dashed to the ground soon, to be deprived of whatever he values in life.

Even the crowned head
Does not bring peace,
It always brings fear, danger, uncertainty.
Whoever is crowned today
Becomes a beggar tomorrow.

Hence, the poet asks, where is peace? Where are hopes? How can he forget the sorrows of sin and death? And where? He consoles himself. Have patience. It's not true that death ends all. There is that 'great gem', the 'great touchstone' that changes dross into gold, and changes death into life. No doubt life is surrounded by darkness, but it is not all darkness. It is like the lotus that rises from mud, and the soul blooms like the lotus.

The body is made of dust
In this world of dust,
But how beautiful is human life!
How unique!
The soul blooms in eternal beauty
Like lotus blooming in a pond of corruption.

It is like a man's thirst, the poet thinks, for something more than the water of the earth, which has after all limited relevance and limited utility. In a different way, the poet points out, man burns forever with the fire of desires which can only be extinguished with the nectar like water of 'dharma' or spiritual understanding. Thus the soul is asked to give up pride, selfishness and temptation, and to devote itself in selfless love and dedication to the benefit of mankind and to the contemplation of that source of eternal beauty and grace.

Oh, my restless soul
Give up all ugly desires
And worship Him,
Who is the abode of grace
And giver of eternal life.

Almost a similar thought runs in another fine poem, entitled

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Ākasaprati, which was published in 1885, but written earlier. Here the sky is addressed with respect and admiration because first of all, it remains detached from the ugliness of worldly life, but more importantly because it provides a larger perspective to the process of life and in itself the source of beauty and grace. When there was nothing, only 'eternal darkness', and no movement, only 'eternal time', and the 'eternal Soul' brooded upon the 'deep' in silence, the sky remained in 'great glory' in the midst of 'darkness'. And then suddenly,

> The first waves rose in the waters of Eternal Time
> They rippled on the orders of Eternal Being
> Suddenly the stream of light emerged on your body
> Like the white streak of Ganga in the tresses
> of Lord Mahadev.

The light widened, the process of life began, and from darkness emerged innumerable worlds and planets, and stars and suns and moons, all set in its body like unique jewels in beautiful formation. And it was all happiness and beauty around :

> Suddenly as you glanced
> The Sun emerged
> Shining gloriously
> And painting the face of the earth
> with golden rays,
> And suddenly the flowers bloomed
> And soft breezes blew
> And the birds sang in sweet melody.

The sky lifted the poet from his limitations, filled his heart with great thoughts, made him aware of the source of happiness and contentment, and led his mind to a contemplation of that great, mystic being who controls and graces all life.

In fact the strongest aspect of Madhusudan's poetic perception lies in his insight into the life of things - a strong mystic perception beyond the immediate, physical manifestations. What we saw in poems such as *Smasana, Nisitha Chinta, Jiban Chinta* etc., that combined an intense meditative mood with a subtle awareness of life's modalities and essences, continued as a powerful, subterra-

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nean force in most of his poems, even to the very end of his career. A few more poems may be discussed at this point. For example, two poems, *Dhwani* (Sound) and *Sankhadhwani* (The Sound of a Conch) published respectively in 1898 and 1902, almost go together. In the former, the poet initially refers to all types of sound that emerge around a man day and night.

The world's noise
All of you hear, day and night
Millions of voices, millions of talks
Incessantly, always.

The clouds, the sea, the stream, the wind that whispers in the trees, the storm that roars, the bees, the doves, the cuckoo that sings with the coming of spring, the animals, the birds,

You hear everywhere
Soft and harsh
Sweet and fearful
The noise of birds, insects, animals
The whole world is full of them.

Also there are other types of noise—the children playing, the sound of festival, the noise of quarrel and sorrow, the baby's babbling, the gay talk of youngmen, the elder's advice, the lies of small men, and the poet's song, and the hero's call. Like this, always, the world is full of millions of noises. But the poet asks, have you ever heard that one, absolute noise?

Listen, O men of the world
And shiver,
How that supreme noise bubbles
In the corners of the universe
Secretly.
In the world's creation, existence, annihilation
It sounds eternally, forever
No beginning, no end
Solemn, immortal
The queen of earth, sky and air.

That immortal sound provokes stars to dance, opens the life's

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stream like the stream of holy Ganga to flow everywhere, and it lives in everybody's heart and holds everybody in eternal embrace, in eternal love, and it says,

Where do you go?
After what noise you run like mad?
I am that soundless sound
I live with you, in your heart
Listen to me.

The organization of *Sankhadhwani* is slightly different. The poem begins with a reference to an evening — the sun sets in the west, the shadow at the end of the day is cast across the sky, and silently, solemnly and slowly the peaceful evening pours the water of peace over the head of a tired earth. At this hour, a tired traveller returning home and walking briskly, suddenly hears the sound of conch being blown from a distant village. He listened for a moment and was stunned :

I turned my ears for a moment
And listened to those lovely waves of sound,
I was stunned as if in a dream
And my soul awoke in a great awakening,
I could hear the ripples of a great sea
Illimitable, vast
The sound of eternal sea
Playing in the sea-born conch.

And the conch gives a call, a call for eternal, immortal life, to the lone, wearied traveller who tends to forget his 'eternal abode',

Come
Wake up the great Word
Let the sons of eternity rise,
Be happy in eternal life
Be fearless in immortality,
And sing the songs of that eternal sweetness
In this abode of earth.

A related poem is *E Srusti Amrutamaya he.* (This World Full of Nectar), which was written in 1901, and was collected in

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Kusumanjali (1903). It spells out, in an 84-line-poem, a similar perception of the presence of beauty and grace in all aspects of life and in the world as a whole. The first stanza, with reference to the world and God's creation, sums up the total perception :

A greatly sweet creation
A grandly pleasant creation
A splended creation of beauty and grace,
Wake you up, men and women,
All children of immortality
And drink that cup of nectar
And sing its praise
The praise of eternal, immortal happiness.

The heart as well as the sky glow with light, the illumination from space banishes both the darkness and the fear of death, the deep sea rings with divine music, the great hills, the restless ever-dancing winds, the burning desert lost in the horizon, the green fields, the green forests full of songs and fragrance, the ever-flowing rivers, mirror-like ponds and the murmuring ripples that reflect the sun and the moon, all fill the heart with divine sweetness.

The earth the sky and the space
Are all the stages of nature,
The animates and inanimates
The animals, birds and insects
This mysterious great universe
All full of happiness, great happiness
And stream with everflowing nectar.

And the fresh, purifying dawn, shady, meditative evening, active, bright day, the moonlit night like a nun, and the spring, summer, rains, autumn and the winter are all graced with immense divine beauty. Again, the family, the human society, the localities full of men and women, parents, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, the elders, the relatives, schools and temples, and love, devotion, mercy are all abodes of that divine being who is eternally loving and graceful.

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He brings out sweetness out of poison
He is where sweetness springs eternally
The great father, the great mother
He assures eternal security,
Suckle that sweetness of great happiness
Like a child
And be fearless eternally.

III

Madhusudan's mystic awareness, that is, his capacity to transcend outward realities to perceive an inner source of light and life, is best seen in his two famous poems, written separately in a gap of about 20 years. The poems were, *Rusiprane Debabatarana* (1891) and *Himachale Udaya Utchab* (1911). Though the poems have some difference as regards the style and the use of language, they have a good deal of thematic similarity and have almost a similar point of view. Both are, in a way, long poems, the former in 176 lines, and the latter in 158 lines, and in both, the time is dawn, or more particularly, the rise of dawn, in the former on the banks of the mythical river Saraswati, and in the latter in the Himalayas. In the former the protagonist is an ancient Rishi whom the rise of dawn puts in an ecstatic meditation, in the latter the protagonist is the poet himself who also lapses into a mystic jubilation at the sight of seeing dawn breaking over the Himalayas. They begin almost with a similar note of joy, and conclude with an almost similar submission to divine presence in whom the human soul finally gets merged.

Structurally *Rusiprane* has six phases. The first provides a reference to the end of the night and the first glimpses of dawn :

Night ends
Peace and tranquillity,
In the snow-white forehead of dawn
Shines gloriously
The beautiful Mars,
Like the Kaustuva-jewel of heaven,
A picture unparalled
In the eastern horizon.

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In the western sky one can see eternally snow-bound and snow-capped great Himalayas, breaking out with glorious light. And the nymphs from the horizons, the poet points out, washed the feet of the dawn with water of dew, joined in the celebration of dawn and received the glorious ornaments of light as the dawn's blessings. The whiteness of full-moon night now joined with the whiteness of dawn and the light bubbled like the water of a white ocean,

At the touch of the blessed hand
The white-ocean bubbled,
The bright light drowned the universe
It streamed from horizon to horizon.
Was it a divine-marriage of earth and the sky?

In the second phase the poet refers to a tall youngman, full of bodily grace and dignity ("the beards shining like fire/ the arms stretching to the thighs/spacious breast/...a powerful youngman/ shining like the sun") who stands on the bank of the river Saraswati, welcomes the glorious dawn shining like a crown on the Himalayas, and himself immersed in the great emerging thoughts, communicates with the dawn :

The eyes expanded in great love
He sees the play of the great union,
The mind sinks in great love
The eyes closed,
In a world beyond senses
The spirit drowned in a sea of meditation,
And like lightening
The great divine pictures splashed
in the Rishi's mind.

In the third phase there is an account of 'the great divine presence' which is everywhere and nowhere, who takes every form and takes no form, and about whom one may not know anything and yet knows everything :

A form without form — what beauty :
In all animates inanimates, eternally
A picture beyond imagination, beyond life
Yet illumination of illumination in front of eyes,

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From far to far, beyond words
Gets near, very near, within oneself
Without sound without touch
Without form without essence
Yet greatest truth, essence of all,
Fixed in itself without container
Eternal, unapproachable, contains the whole universe
Everywhere, right left
In the front, at the back
At the top, at the bottom
Yet without shape without form,
The greatest beauty
Always full, always everywhere.

In the fourth phase the divine presence becomes eloquent and descends on the Rishi's spirit, like the divine Ganga descending on the earth. It is the Divine Word, the poet points out, the sound without noise, the silent voice, beyond the comprehension of words:

Who knows from where the Sound emanated
How it filled the Rishi's heart given to God,
The boom of *Onkara* of a world-wide presence
Filled the universe with a sweet, musical sound
How shall I describe that filling beyond words?
How shall I know the descent of Divinity
on human soul?

In the fifth phase, the divine communication changed the Rishi, his mind, heart, body, everything changed. His eyes glowed with unearthly light, and his face bloomed like a fresh lotus. His body shivered as if struck by lightening, his hairs stood on end, and tears of a great love flowed from his eyes incessantly. Like a pile of stoking fire the illumination spread to horizons, and encompassed all skies, all space:

The 'in' and 'out' ceased to exist
The spectrum of light flamed like fire
The earth, the water, the winds, the sky
Joined in one illumination ...

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The Rishi's nerves broke suddenly
His heart bubbled with great desires
And through his closed throat, restlessly
Flowed the stream of words like the waves in the sea,
He sang, on the banks of Saraswati,
In the morning sky,
Like Saraswati flowing
The hymns flowed, the great music of words,
In great love, floating in tears,
In great ecstasy ...

In the last phase it is the Rishi's hymn, the praise of Great God, the divinity that fills everything everywhere, the sky, the earth, the hearts of men, with wonderful light and joy and happiness. Immortality is His shadow, death is His servant and the gods of sky worship Him — the immortal Agni of holy altar, Indra who wields the thunder and sits on Airābata, the Winds that flow through all worlds, the fiery Sun who roams in the sky, Baruna who contains landand water, and the Dawn that expels darkness. So too, He is worshippped by Day and Night, by Months and Years, by Seasons, as well as by Time and moments of time.

Who are you glorying in your own glory?
In glorious emanation in this little heart,
You descend in words in strange arrangement
You are all beings, the maker of this life
You are imminent, the parents of all,
The one unique Lord, the absolute source
The only Divinity, the Brahma without form.

Himachale Udaya Utchaba, as has been pointed out, was written in 1911, after about 20 years of *Rusiprane*, and almost the last product of Madhusudan's poetic oeuvre, after which whatever he wrote was of exceedingly minor nature. The poem begins with an account of the rise of dawn in the Himalayan mountains, with particular reference to Kanchanjangha, and how it slowly takes a bright and beautiful shape in the surrounding darkness of the sky. The sight is fantastic. It provides immense joy and happiness to the poet. He is almost mesmerized, and slowly his

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own soul, his own existence, gets merged with the immense beauty of the dawn, almost like a 'marriage' of two beings. Finally the poet breaks out in an ecstatic jubilation and praise of the superior presence exhibited in nature, to which almost in a sense of revelation, he submits.

First, it is like a declaration where the poet points out how all his anxieties have come to a fruition with the rise of consciousness at the end of the night. Then the dawn breaks,

> At that moment between the night and the day
> The east glowed,
> And the sky took up the radiance
> In the space,
> Across the blue expanse
> Expanded the fine free brightness,
> Like the glow of pearls
> It flashed across the horizons
> Into the sky,
> And ascending in the steps of diamonds
> Smiling
> the Dawn emerged in her chariot.

The hills around were still, as if watching the great, holy occasion. And among them rose Kanchangangha, in grand dignity, white-complexioned, piercing the sky, like the great priest of glorious nature. Then in great jubilation light spread,

> Suddenly in great celebration mysteriously
> The light flamed in the eastern sky,
> And in the remotest pit of distant west
> Chasing away the dense darkness of night,
> Like fire in the crystal-white altar of the hills
> It leapt into brightness
> In great space.

Slowly the sun rose in the east, and with a quick brush it painted the tops of mountains with red. Then the scene changed. The golden rays of the sun touched the white pinnacles of Kanchanjangha. The pink vanished and the hills were drowned by golden waves.

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The mountains foamed in happiness
The light descended from hill to hill
In the east, in the south
In the west and the north
Spread across hundreds of miles
Across hundreds of mountains.

The celebration was fantastic, miraculous, the poet says. The light was everywhere, a fantastic scene. It got into the pores of the poet's body, shocked and excited him into miraculous realization and happiness,

In every part of the body
In every pore
Rose a new life
In great happiness,
And all on a sudden
In a unique musical tone
The soul danced
In great abandon.

Love sprang, and in the midst of mountains, in that auspicious moment, the poet's soul united in a 'marriage' of great love with that universal beauty.

My life merged with nature's life
Nature's life flowed into my life,
Both joined in a strange, divine marriage
And the virgin-heart turned into a bride.

He is the most intimate friend, the dispenser of all universe, and in an eternal, invisible bond he drew the poet to Himself. The poet's body shivered, and his heart blossomed in a heart-rending hymn:

My eyes open today
They merge in your eyes,
In this morning
Everywhere
In this earth, in the sky
Your lights fill the universe.

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The great heavens all around
The great beauty of marriage all around
In the richness of devotion
In the glory of chastity
Blessed I am
Blessed in the feeling of your victory.
This world is mine today —
This fantastic, beautiful earth and the sky,
My ears ring
The caverns of my heart ring
In wonderful music
In immortal tunes,
And my heart's lyre bursts at your touch
In divine, life-giving *Omkar,* ah Lord!
And in every atom of this universe
I can hear the inaudible tunes of Veena and Flute.

Madhusudan's mystical perception constitutes a very important aspect of his poetry. It was the direct outcome of his own reflective bent of mind, a mind given to philosophical understanding of the essences of life. Related to this in a general way, but in a lower key, are such poems that have devotional content on the one hand, and on the other a moralizing structure like a teacher's instructions to his pupils. Thus poems entitled *Staba, Stotra* etc. are direct submissions to the Lord where the Great God's immense powers have been eulogized, His kind actions vis-a-vis the creation have been praised and finally the poet completely surrenders himself to the Lord and requests Him to lead him from untruth to truth, and from darkness to light. Similarly the group of devotional songs that he composed, almost in the nature of prayer-songs, sung at different prayer-meetings, were motivated towards inculcating devotion and love for God in the hearts of the listeners. He instructs people to be aware of the temporariness of life, and to fix attention on that single, steady divine point that has the capacity to rescue people from the morass of living beset with untruth, smallness and divison. Thus as in Song No.3 *(Sangeetamala),*

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Today across the sky
In what a sweet, wonderful sound
Plays the harp
And calls everybody to wake up.

Or in Song No.14,

Night is over, wake up, be happy
And worship Him, the Sea of Love.
The young sun in the sky —
What a picture of illumination!
The darkness vanishes
The world aglow with light,
Sing His praise
The Creator of Universe.

Or as in Song No.39,

I have come to you in great sorrow
In great depression,
Pity me, oh Lord,
Take away my sorrow, rescue me.
The time passed in temptation
In pursuit of false happiness,
I now float in the sea of despondency
Oh Lord!

The related poems that aim at instilling good conduct and a sense of morality, are short poems that shine like short pieces of gems, and they reveal the poet's keenness about goodness, honesty and truth. It is not enough that one lives. The conditions of iving should be seasoned with goodness of heart, fairness of character and obedience to truth ("Listen to me/Pursue truth/It is your best goal/Best action/It is the rarest thing on earth/Most powerful"). A typical piece is *Janmamarana* (Life and Death).

The day you dropped from the mother's womb
And touched this earth
Everybody smiled, happy,
But you cried, cried hoarse.
Now spend this life, this rare life, so

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So that when you go
You go smiling, happy
And everybody else cries
Cries hoarse.

IV

An equally important aspect of Madhusudan's poetry is seen in his sensitiveness to nature, though its range is limited particularly when compared with Radhanath's poetry. But within its limitation it has a good deal of sincerity and intensity of feeling, and particularly in rare, intense moments it gets transformed into a medium through which the poet's thoughts move to higher mystical heights. Some of the early nature-poems of the poet, written around 1881, 1882, dealt with the seasons separately — a habit one comes across with ancient Oriya poets, who in their own ways had described the major seasons, particularly the summer, rains and winter in great verve and detail. Madhusudan had six poems on six seasons respectively, each set to tuning in a traditional *raga,* and each specifying the seasonal characteristics of the particular season. The seasons are, *Basanta* (Spring), *Grishma* (Summer), *Barshā* (Rains), *Sarat* (Autumn), *Hemanta* (Early Winter) and *Sisira* (Late winter). Thus, with the coming of the Spring the wind blows from the south, the flowers bloom, the birds sing, the bees move from flower to flower and all around there is happiness and joy in a new life.

The bumble bee moves cheerily
And drinks honey from flowers,
The juicy mango trees have new leaves and new buds,
The cuckoo sits on the branches
And sings songs of joy enchantingly,
The stream falls murmuringly
In the forest, across stones,
And everywhere, in land and water
In the hills, in the forest, in the sky
All proclaim the beauties of spring. *(Basanta)*

The Summer changes the climate. After the sweet spring the cruel summer comes when the sun's rays pierce like sharp arrows,

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the land gets heated, the hot wind blows and carries the hot dust-cloud to the sky, and the sun's rays become like a furnace.

All tortured by heat, contracted
Animals, birds, all creatures and beings,
The throats and palates get dry
All become restless
All tortured by thirst.
And in the hills and forests the fire spreads
All consuming, dreadful. *(Grisma)*

But the Rains bring solace and life. The clouds gather in the skies, lightenings flash, thunders roll,

And it rains in torrents
The hot body of the earth becomes cool
Water fills the rivers, ponds and fields
And the farmers sing in great joy. *(Barsa)*

The flowers bloom in plenty like *kadamba, nilotpala, champā,* and *mālati,* and *gallinule* calls and frogs jump about and cry themselves hoarse. On seeing blue clouds the peacocks dance. The white streams across the hills' body look like garlands, and white clouds appear like so many crowns shining with diamond like lightening. And rains are good,

They do good
They are so beneficial,
They help people and land
They are friends to trees and animals
They are merciful, full of benediction. *(Barsa)*

The Autumn comes next. It is the season when the sky becomes clearer, the nights brighter, the moon sweeter. Also the flowers bloom and crops ripe and people move about freely.

The beautiful autumn appears,
The Queen Earth smiles
And shows her many beauties.
Pieces of white clouds float in the blue sky
Like so many ships floating in the blue sea,
The moon shines brightly at night

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It whitenes everywhere, all directions,
The bright stars come with the moon
They shine like so many flowers in the sky.
The virgins put flowers in their dark blue tresses
Look at the star-studded dark blue sky
And sing songs in great joy
And please all and sundry. *(Sarata)*

Then comes the Winter in two parts, early first, and then the real winter. Days become shorter and nights longer. The sun's rays lessen and cold wind blows from the north.

Blue lotuses bloom in clear blue water
The ponds look beautiful you can't describe
Innumerable birds land on paddy fields
And swans float lazily in water.

But winter deepens, the wind becomes colder,

The moon and stars look pale at night
The mists spread everywhere, over villages and fields
Mustard flowers bloom and shine like gold
Like as if a yellow-cloth is worn by Queen Earth,
White flowers dot the fences
Like as if little stars over the firmament.

The poet wishes the cycle of seasons to continue. The winter will be over soon, and once again the sweet spring will be there. He thanks the Great Designer and feels grateful for his eternal mercy.

An equally interesting poem, written a few years later, around 1884, was *Sarat Prabhāt* where the poet calls upon his friend to leave the crowd and noise of the town and to go over to the village where the innocent and simple cowherds and farmers spend their days happily.

This is autumn time, O friend,
Let us roam in the villages
Let us see how nature beautifies
Let us submit to her
Let us talk, relax.

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The poet refers to birds who sing in the morning, the wind that blows softly and touches the flowers like a lover, the bumble bee that flies crazily after fragrance, the lazy ripples over the fields of growing crops, and the flowers that are so many and so colourful:

And the village maids walk playfully
See their faces in the mirror of water
And feel happy at their own beauty.
And virgins pluck blue lotuses
Raise mounds of sands and worship Lord Sankara
And their wet tresses flow loosely in the wind.

There are other poems too, such as, a poem as an address to the river *(Nadi Prati)* and a poem on the lotus *(Padma)*, written more or less at the same time, around 1898, and a poem on the midnight in a Spring full-moon day *(Basanta Purnimā Ardharātri)* written around 1902. The poems, as before, show the poet's sensitiveness to nature combined with a reflective mood. The first poem, an address to the river, is in fact an account of the river's journey from its source in the mountains, through the plains to the sea. The poet imagines the river to be the daughter of the hills, in whose wombs she stayed, away from men's gaze, alone, dreaming. Then the call of the world penetrated,

Slowly, into the tavern of the womb
In strange manners
The call of the world sounded,
Your dreams broke
You opened your eyes
You saw the divine light of the sun
Across your breast
Like a line of gold on the touch stone.
You marvelled at the sight
You shivered
You streamed out quickly, tremblingly.

The clouds thundered in the sky
The rains fell like strains of music
They lifted you, swelled your heart,

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You could not contain yourself
You poured out spilling all over.

You left the hills, thundered cheerfully
And you descended on the earth,
Then they came from all directions
To see you in great joy,
Your foaming, rippling body
Your restless, murmuring voice
Your water, transparent, clear,
You pleased all, in great happiness.

Then the poet describes how the river went through forests and fields, across towns and villages, near temples, markets, schools, funeral grounds,

And you travelled many countries, many places
Till at last, on the way you met that — the tides,
And in great pleasure your heart filled
You looked wide, magnificent, liberal.

Finally the sea came. The ever-moving water mixed with the blue vast expanse. All differences were forgotten in the happy song of the eternal mix.

The poem of the lotus, unlike the poem *Nadi Prati*, has two different aspects. First, it shows sensitiveness to the beauties of lotus as such as a flower, and secondly, the lotus becomes the spring-broad for the poet to get into his characteristic reflections about human life.The poem begins with a sense of great joy and happiness on seeing the lotus :

Oh, lotus you are like million jewels
With what sweetness your body is formed?
On seeing your beauty my heart leaps up
In happiness, in pleasure.

In the blue, free water of the pond
In the midst of dark, free leaves
Under the bright, free rays of the sun
Oh lotus! you bloom in free, easy movements.

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Slowly, the mind veers to higher thoughts,

The nectar of immortality is in your heart
What fragrance it emits, how enchanting!
The bumble bees drink that sweetness and get mad
And heart becomes cool at that wonderful scent.
....
Whatever is pure, good, holy
They are all mixed with your name ...
The great God,
Whatever is true, permanent, beautiful
They are all a part of yours,
Oh lotus! you are epitome of all beauty, all grace.

Finally, the poet desires that he be joined with the lotus, and bloom like the lotus, in purity and grace, in the midst of surrounding corruption.

The third poem, on the midnight in a Spring full-moon day, is shorter in comparison to the earlier ones, but it too combines as before the poet's sensitiveness to nature along with his reflections about it. The beauties of a spring mid-night streaming with the full moon-light give impression to the poet of the vastness of white water where he drinks to his full and achieves an unsurpassable sensation of peace and tranquillity, and hears that unheard-of divine music which provides an unprecedented joy and solace to the living.

V

Madhusudan lived and wrote at a time which was contemporaneous to nationalistic and patriotic ideas that were coming to the forefront in the Indian scene. His friend Radhanath's unfinished epic *Mahajatra* was a powerful testimony of the same, and we have seen how it led him to difficulties with the administration. Besides, under the impact of Madhusudan Das, the founder-father of Oriya nationalism, a pride in Orissan heritage and a keen desire to unify the Oriya-speaking tracts was rapidly gaining ground. All these had their necessary influence on Madhusudan, and he composed number of poems with nationalistic ideas. These can be grouped into two sections, first, those that had references to India

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as well as to Orissa, and secondly, all those that expressed sentiments about a new age and a new awakening. The poems were written beginning from about 1882 till about 1903, catering to different occasions and situations. Thus an early poem entitled *Janmabhumi* was written to be sung by the children in the schools, and some of the poems collected in the volume *Utkalagatha* were composed as inaugural songs for Utkal Union Conferences.

Janmabhumi, probably the poet's earliest poem to deal with such ideas, is a simple invocation of Mother India, a fine song in *raga chokhi* and a very popular one, that speaks of great mountains, rivers and forests of the country along with many great people, both men and women, who were born in this country and provided unique glory to the Mother. The poet submits himself as the son of such a great Mother in whose services, he hopes, his life would be spent. But other poems do not have such simple structure. For example, in the poems such as *Bhārati Bandanā* (Worshipping Bharati), *Bhārata Bhāvanā* (Thoughts about Bharata) and *Sripanchami,* written in 1883 (the first two) and 1897 (the last one) respectively, the poet, on the one hand, remembers the great glories of the past, and on the other, invokes the Goddess Saraswati, that is, Bharati, and hopes that both ways it would be possible to have the will to uplift the country from the depression and corruption (and by implication the loss of independence) into which it has fallen. Thus as in *Bharati Bandana,* Goddess Saraswati, whose beauty beggars description and who provides eternal happiness, has been invoked to come to Bharata to encourage new and newer creations, and without whom,

> The country is dark without you, Oh Mother,
> Like a monstrous funeral ground,
> All the sons of Bharata are dead
> They have no hope, no desire to work
> The country is quiet, still
> No more the harp of life plays,
> Bharata is only 'Bharata' in name.

And elsewhere in the same poem :

> How long should it be like this?

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How long Bharata should suffer
this great depression?
Oh Mother Bharati, be kind, come,
Play your harp that defeats death
That gives life, like nectar,
Let this country awake into life.

Similarly in *Bharata Bhavana :*

Is this that holy land known all over the world
The vast amphitheatre of Aryan-glory?
Is this that Bharata whose songs of greatness
Filled all horizons in resounding tunes?

No, no, Bharata has no longer that stream
That sustained the Mother of Vedas, the Aryan-body,
Where the lotus of soul of the Aryan poets bloomed
And learnt its link with the super-soul of the Sun.

....

What strange ways of destiny -
Like bubbles in a river
The great treasure is lost.

And also in *Sripanchami,* the celebration of the holy day dedicated to Goddess Saraswati :

Oh, Mother, let your harp play
And let the sons of Bharata awake,
Let the country be taught
The penance of holy truth,
Let your call wake up the Great Hero
Let the Great Conch sound
The conch of the Great Man in the chariot of Bharata,
And let the sorrows of Bharata go, removed.

The poet's sentiments about Orissa or Utkal are equally expressive. Most of his such poems, as was said earlier, were collected in the volume *Utkalagatha*, and the volume was appropriately dedicated to Madhusudan Das the 'great son of Orissa'. It contained poems such as *Utkala Sangita* (The Songs of Orissa). *Utkala Bandanā* (Worshipping Orissa), *Utkala Janani Prati* (For

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Mother Orissa) etc., along with a group of songs captioned as *Jātiya Sangita* (National Songs). As in the case of poems about India, so also in these poems the poet had almost similar feelings as related to Orissa. Thus first, it is a recollection of past glories, secondly, a sense of great dismay at the present state of depression and inaction, and thirdly, a sincere desire that such crippling conditions should go, and Orissa and the Oriyas should unite and rise to glory and greatness.

Is this the land, the land of glory
Where rose Dhauli, Jaugada
Where 'love for all' is inscribed in the stones,
Which is served by great rivers
Mahānadi, Brāhmani, Subarnarekhā, Rusikullyā,
Where sea extends to the horizon
And where mountains and forests enrapture your heart ...

Oh how it has fallen!
Look, look, what sorrows!
Don't stay timid, lazy,
Work, work,
Make Orissa a bright spot in the world of Bhārata.
(Utkala Sangita)

Why is this darkness in the sky?
Why all stars of hope are out?
Why the Sun of love is dead?
Life's Ganga does not flow any more
And meaningless chaos is everywhere,
Where is the exciting song of truth?
Where are the heroes, the immortal love?
No life, no movement, like a dry desert —
Oh, Mother, tell us,
Why all that
Why everything sorrowful and lost? *(Utkal Janani Prati)*

Let all the limbs of Utkal unite
Let all be together in one body
Let there be the bond of love for all
Let conscience rise above small interest

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Let the million voices join in unison
Let all the sons of Utkal sing in happiness
Let there be new hope, new life,
Be strong, confident
God's blessing would be on you. (*Jatiya Sangita,* i)

Allied to these, there are other poems, as has been pointed out, that express in general, feelings of a new hope and a new awakening, and focus on the coming of a new age. Some such poems are, *Nababarsha* (New Year, 1898), *Nabajugar Abhiseka* (The Coronation of the New Age, 1901) and *Jayagāna* (The Songs of Victory, 1903) etc. The first poem begins with an invocation of the new year.

Hail New Year, God's new messenger
The new guest, the incarnation of time,

and moves over to a new hope of resurrection :

Oh please come to my heart
Which is like a funeral ground
Where so many hopes and desires have been burnt.
Oh please open the path of new benediction
Utter the words of holy inspiration
O save us, save us, these poor destitute people. *(Nababarsa)*

In *Nabajugar Abhiseka* too, where the New Age is crowned as the New Prince, the poet refers to new ideas coming from all directions and changing the very structure of life :

The immortal music full of joyous happiness
Float from all directions and enrapture the heart,
The south wind of happiness blows in the heart's
lotus-forest
The eternal victory-conch of dharma sounds loudly
Its declaration is full of holiness and goodness
Wonderful music of new and newer ideas.

Similarly, in *Jayagana,* the poet sings the praises of Mother, the Motherland, and hopes that she will take away all fear and despair, and fill the heart with new hopes and new strength :

O Mother, the Fearless One

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Do take away the load stone of fear and despair,
And fill the hearts with new hopes
And new strength and power.

And instruct us,
And sing the fearless song of new awakening.

VI

We have seen how Radhanath and Madhusudan were together responsible in creating new taste in Oriya literature, particularly in Oriya poetry, at the turn of the 19th century. One may say that to that extent both were complementary to each other. Whereas Radhanath excelled in writing kavyas, both narrative and descriptive, Madhusudan wrote short pieces, mostly lyrics, sonnets, odes etc., and whereas Radhanath's was mostly impersonal in structure, that is, his personal factors came as incorporations in his long story-based kavyas, Madhusudan's was mostly personal in approach and attitude and often his desire was to be as explict as possible in highlighting intense personal emotions. Thus whether it was in connection with nature, or about contemporary national —istic and p[illegible]s, or in feelings about a superior mystical being who was both [illegible] one's nature and beyond it, or about such aspects of life that relate to manners, habits, character, and even in one's reflective and devotional aspects, the orientation has almost always been from personal point of view and in expression of one's own sensitive personal nature. That was the new note which Madhusudan initiated and developed throughout his poetic career, and that constituted not only the most important aspect of his poetry, but also a major aspect in the development of Oriya poetry that followed Madhusudan. Apart from the poems discussed earlier, other pertinent poems include such poems as deal with the poet's personal factors of life on the one hand, as well as satires, elegies, eulogies and poems with social attitudes on the other.

Two poems, entitled *Jaubanar Swapna* and *Jara Akramana*, written around 1901, 1902, have very personal references. The first poem has three sections, each in a sonnet form. The first

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section deals with the poet's desires for love. He is young, and he is keen to find out some one, a lady of grace and beauty, whom he can offer his love and heart's desires :

My heart, full of love and desires
Under what a strange, incantatory spell
Roamed around restlessly
Seeking the companion of the heart.
The heart wanted to merge with another heart
The body to unite with another body
The neck to be encircled by a pair of hands
And the eyes to be drowned in some other's eyes.

In this condition of the mind the poet saw a strange, extremely charming, unprecedented dream, which is the burden of the second section :

I saw a bright moon shining in the sky
It poured its transparent light, like nectar, silently
Below was the vast expanse of a sea-beach
Bathed in the holy moon light of a night-sea,
And as I roamed around in the beach
I saw a playful stream sleeping in the white sands
And as I sat on the bank of the stream
I saw a paragon of beauty
In the lotus-forest of the white moonshine,
In eternal youth
With a garland of *Parijat* flower
Which she offers in great love
Round the neck of the Universe...

The sight charmed the poet, and he got drowned in the beauty that flowed from that unparalled figure. And then suddenly, and begins the third section :

Suddenly I started and saw
The charming figure of a lady of sixteen,
The face like a lotus
And dressed with delicate stream of hair,
The body was bathed by white moonshine
Without polish, in poor clothes, but beauty unparalled
Eyes half-opened like a bud
A figure of shyness ...

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The poet first thought that she was a divine figure, as it were, who had come from heaven to fulfil his desires, but then he realized that she was his dearest, the source of his life.

She is my dearest, the jewel of my life
I could know the silent figure instantly,
I embraced her in love, and said,
"O my dearest, this life is yours".
She offered herself, her life and youth,
The queen of my heart's cottage
The partner of my life.

The second poem's (*Jara Akramana*) tenor is very much away from the first poem's motivation of love. It shows the poet's awareness of the passage of time. Youth is over, and old age is very much at the door. It takes away strength without one knowing it.

The youthful palace totters
It crumbles at the slightest touch,
The light from the eyes fades
The legs drag without strength,
The hairs turn grey, thin
The voice feeble, melting ...

The poet thinks of the body as a broken house, and feels depressed that he would be out soon ("Death comes/It will oust me"). But that is not the last word. He feels angry that it is so :

Shame, shame, how can it be!
My heart rings with eternal spring,
O Lord, my life's Maker, the Sea of Mercy,
You are the eternal spring of my life.

Thus the poet rises beyond his depression, realizes that he cannot be a victim of time's passage, and no amount of disease can hold him down. He bathes in the stream of eternal life and becomes a part of immortality :

Eternal immortal desires
Like the nectar of happiness
Bubble like a stream
And flow from his heart.

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In fact, whatever might be the situation, Madhusudan's mind was like a very sensitive antenna that almost always received the messages of an eternal, immortal life, and it would be interesting to note how often these got integrated with factors of his personal life. *Naba Basanta Bhabana* is such a poem. It begins with a happy note that the spring is back on the earth :

The cycle is turned
And the Spring, the King of Seasons, is back
In sweetness, in the world of sweetness.

The southern gate is open, the poet says, and the south-wind blows now and takes the message of spring everywhere. The queen earth wears the cloth of new leaves and the cuckoo, the poet of the forest, fills the place with exciting notes :

The celebration of Spring is on
And the sick earth is like a new paradise,
The flow of life is like the flow of Ganga
And the dead, dull stone blossoms with a new happiness,...

But slowly the poet's thoughts move towards himself. In the midst of this great celebration of spring he finds himself sick, feeble, desease-ridden, full of despair—

Why, why my heart so stuck
To a house of diseases,
So full of tears, broken, dead ?
Crippled in crisis, full of despair
Without hope, tired,
The life's stream is dry
The beauty, grace gone
A poor, ugly, miserable soul!

As the poet thought more and more of his 'misfortune', and the 'darkness' surrounding his soul appeared to be without any relief, all on a sudden the rays of wisdom shone, and his eyes 'opened':

My eyes of understanding
Opened like a lotus in the sun's rays
My mortal eyes saw the unprecedented sight
My heart's corridors rang with new songs

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My mind became quiet, tranquil
I heard that which I had not heard before.

Then begins the last phase of the poet's thoughts. He comes to realize what constitute the 'eternal' and 'permanent' factors of life and how best they provide a relief from darkness into life :

Oh my soul, look into yourself -
The permanent, the beauty, the source of eternal life.
The eternally fresh spring
The celebration of sweetness
The eternal life, the eternal youth
And the treasure of great happiness,
This is your fate, your destiny
The Lord of your life ordains so,
Rise, be free,
And break all ropes of attachment.
They are like mirages,
Submit to Great Being
And rise to new life.

In an interesting way the poet's prime desires for purity, goodness and grace that season his thoughts about life, and often lift him to a mystic perception of life's unity and permanence, can be seen even in his sympathetic thoughts about fallen women on the one hand (*Patita Ramani*) and in the nostalgic reflections of a lady who has passed away, on the other (*Kaunasi Paralokabasini Prati)*. In both cases, the poet's thoughts move from either painful social realites or painful, intimate recollections, towards goodness and grace, and to an awareness of qualities of eternal womanhood manifested in these women. Thus in one case :

A pure, bright light streamed from your face
It pierced my heart's darkness,
Your unparalled beauty
Your words like drops of nectar
Took away all my sorrow. (*Paralokabasini*)

In another case :

Said Great Mother, the source of all purity,
'Though fallen, she is my daughter,

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I will rescue her, give her the jewel of salvation,
She is pure, divine
Who can deprive her?' (*Patita*)

There are other poems too, that exhibit a similar tendency, the poems of different nature, such as elegies and eulogies. Though these are not many in number (elegies 7, and eulogies 5) yet they express a substantial and intimate aspect of the poet's attitudes and sensibility. These are about people with most of whom he came in close contact or had a good deal of respect for them. The elegies related to such personalities as Queen Victoria, Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanja Deo of Mayurbhanja, Sir Basudev Sudhal Dev of Bamanda, Maharshi Debendranath, Radhanath Ray and Pearymohan Acharya. In each case the poet's personal grief is compounded with the general sorrow at the demise of such important personalities, and everywhere the poet holds high the unique qualities of head and heart which each of them possessed. Each lived splendidly, the poet maintains, each one's life was dedicated to promote truth and goodness, and when they died they became a part of that eternal dispensation that provides beauty and grace to all creation. Thus the death of Queen Victoria was seen as an event of universal misfortune which can be related to the passing away of any great personality anywhere :

The monstrous dark shadow of Death
Spread its great wings suddenly
And circled the whole world all at once,
The cruel callous wind blew
And its fierce breath extinguished
The lamps of happiness
In thousands of provinces
In millions of cottages, everywhere.

Or the death of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra was seen as a passing into a realm of light, of immense beauty and happiness :

Whatever the mortal eyes have not seen
See that — the land of great illumination,
The holy river of light
Whose waves of wisdom, love and beauty

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Play on the harp of eternal words ...

Or as related to Radhanath :

Oh Mother Saraswati,
In this land of Utkal
In this new age,
The poet who appeared under your grace
Whose poems are woven so carefully, so well
A man versed in all humour
The best flower in the garden of flowers ...
Oh Goddess, he lives on
Like lightening in dark clouds of sorrow
Bright, ever exciting.

The eulogies were written also with reference to Sir Sudhala Dev and Radhanath as well as about Phakirmohan Senapati, Gaurisankar Roy, and Sri Sachidananda Tribhuban Dev, son of Sir Sudhala Dev. All the poems, except the one for Sri Sachidananda, were in sonnet-form, and express the poet's appreciation of the persons concerned, not only for what they were, persons of great merit, but also because they imparted immense goodness and grace to whatever they did, and manifested the joys of transcendental living in their own lives. An interesting extract is from *Bāmandā Rāj-Prasasthi,* the poem about Sri Sachidananda Tribhuban Dev, where the poet describes the beauty of Pradhānpāta, the famous waterfall at Debagada, the capital town of Bamanda. The beauty of the waterfall, the poet maintains, lies in its apearance as a *rishi* in meditaion, given to thoughts of eternal harmony and sacrifice :

I saw once again after so many years
The figure of Pradhanpata in meditation
Along the Kaidantā hills,
What transcendental meditation!
What immense self-sacrifice!
The great fall in singular action
Through eternal times —
Your water, like fruits of eternal meditation,
You pour on earth in love
O great mendicant!

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VII

Madhusudan's main forte was poetry which established him as a pioneering and leading writer of the time and account for his great influence on later generations. But in another area his influence was equally powerful, even in a way more powerful than his achievement as a poet. This was in the educational area, in his writings for children, particularly for school children in the early years of learning. As we have seen, this was a historical necessity in the concluding decades of the 19th century, when with the spread of English education there was an urgent need of books in Oriya for schools where none existed. Madhusudan responded quickly and competently, and the books that he wrote in Oriya, such as, *Bālabodha, Barnabodha, Sisubodha, Sahitya Kusum, Sahitya Prasanga* and *Prabandhamala* etc. provided a complete course in Oriya in the early years in the schools. The books were graded, in a way, both thematically and linguistically, and contained poetry pieces wherever needed, particularly in the earlier books. To this extent Madhusudan could be compared to Iswarchandra Vidyasagar of Bengal, who in fact was his model and preceptor in preparing educational books for the schools. What Vidyasagar did to the Bengali language, that is, the way generations of Bengali learners grew up on Vidyasagar, a similar thing happened to Madhusudan vis-a-vis Oriya language. Madhusudan's influence as related to school curriculum at the early stage continued almost till Independence, and even for sometime beyond it, and his name became a legend, and his books became classics for Oriya learners, who not only grew up on those books, but also passed the fond memory from generation to generation.

In preparing books Madhusudan mostly composed original lessons, both in prose and poetry. At the same time he also felt free to translate, particularly relevant prose passages and pieces, from both English and Bengali. Added to this, he prepared verse-renderings of mythological episodes s· ch as banishment of Rama, or banishment of Sita or the killing of Karna etc. in simple language and easy rhymes. All these together constituted a substantial body of children's literature which aimed at providing entertainment for them as well as upliftment of their morals, manners and character. To that effect, Madhusudan was the first

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major writer to aim at such categories of readers, and in years to come remained as one of the most important.

In this connection reference may again be made to his poetry collection *Chhandamala* which was published in three parts between 1881 and 1898. It contained some of the poet's more serious poems, that is, the poems with adult preoccupations of life, along with his motivations towards mystical perceptions. But the volumes also contained a large number of his well-known poems which were particularly aimed at children and many of whom were later incorporated in his text books. Such poems were his six poems on six seasons, his poem on morning (*Prabhāta*) and the poem on evening (*Sandhyā*), the two poems one on mother-earth (*Pruthibiprati*) and the other on motherland (*Janmabhumi*), two mythological recreations (*Sri Ram Banabāsa* and *Karna Baddha*), a poem on the poet's recollections of his mother (*Mo Janani)* poems in praise of the Lord of the Universe (*Staba*) and a group of short poems by way of instruction to children to improve their manners, conduct and morals. As has been pointed out earlier, these poems are simple in design, can be easily understood content-wise, and are meant to be sung with different rhyming schemes or *raga,* such as, *basanta, chakrakeli, bangalāsri, kalahamsakedār, mangala, rāmakeri, chokhi* etc. For example, the poem on morning is as follows :

There was darkness around
The world was quiet, still,
Animals in the lap of earth
Lay unconscious by the magic wand of sleep,
The whole world awoke in a minute
The noise of birds filled the earth
And the sky, the sea, the forests and the mountains,
The wind carried the songs of cuckoo and blackbird
And crows moved around the world waking people,
And lo the sun rose
The noise increased
Everybody got new life
Everybody ran to work.
The farmer goes to land

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The cowherd takes the cows
The children with books in hands
Go cheerfully to schools,
The lotus opens in the pond
And moves slowly in the wind,
The flowers bloom in the garden
The bees move happily,
Dews like diamonds
Lo, how beautiful they look on leaves!
O wake up boys, and remember Him
His grace gives you morning,
Bow to Him.

The prose pieces that Madhusudan included in his books for children were written in a clear, precise style and in the best, contemporaty Oriya prose, which by itself became a model of writing for others. They had a good range and variety and almost always, a clarity of thought that was joined with a felicity of expression. Thus first, there are ideal characters and personalities chosen from ancient epics, history and contemporary times with a view to serving as models for children. Such people were Savitri, Asok, Napoleon, Akbar, Isac Newton, Rani Durgabati, Rani Ahalyabai, Maharsi Debendranath, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Samanta Chandrasekhar, Toru Dutta etc. Then there are topics on traits of character, such as on single-mindedness, on perseverence, on faithfulness, on obedience to parents, and on obedience to teachers etc. There are general accounts, such as, on animals, on space, on volcano, on wind, on water and waterfall, on paper, and on tigers, elephants etc. There are essays too on places in India, such as about Kashmir, the Himalayas, Varanasi, Chilika etc. and also about the ancient monuments of Orissa. There is an interesting group of essays on abstract topics, such as on hapiness of labour, manliness and femininity, speed, and on religious principles etc. Finally, there are short interesting stories to illustrate particularly good action, including the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharat. In short the prose pieces entertain and edify, and they illustrate Madhusudan's creative competence in as good a light as we have seen with reference to poetry. The following

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extract from the piece entitled *Jātiya Sāhitya* (National Literature) is to the point :

> The condition of literature is like a measuring-rod of a nation's civilization. The more a nation is developed the more its national literature is refined and enriched. How the total growth of a nation is intimately connected with its literature can be easily understood if we look into the facts of history. The literatures of the ancient Aryans, the ancient Greeks, and the Romans, the modern English, French and German give ample evidences in support of this view. Those nations that are half-civilized, their literatures are immature and inferior. But those that are uncivilized have no literature whatsoever to their credit ... Literature is like a mirror that reflects both the growth and improvement of nation as well as the liberal ideas of great minds that generate within it. An ancient wise man has pointed out that the essence of life is man and man's most important aspect is his mind. Every intelligent man will understand how beneficial that literature is which preserves within itself the unstained, bright glow of the wisest thoughts of that mind. If greatly talented men of genius are born in a country then the language gets enriched by such literary-gems as poetry, novel, philosophy, science, history, political and religious writing etc., and thus enriched and beautified, as the language starts spreading these high, liberal ideas among people, the nation as a whole gets uplifted towards wisdom and civilization. Therefore national literature is intimately linked with the upliftment of the nation and the relation between both is permanent and unchangeable.

If logic and cogency are the hallmarks of any good prose writing Madhusudan achieved these remarkably. In this connection it may be pertinent to point out two fictional writings that Madhusudan had. One was entitled *Hemamālā*, and the other *Pranayara Adbhuta Parinām*. Both are stories, the latter a long one, but content-wise both could have been developed into novels. Both deal with love, love seasoned with discipline and character and interestingly end in tragic situations. But Madhusudan never continued this line, and particularly the latter, dealing with a

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foreign story about characters from Cicely and Belmont, appears to be a translation though the critics have not been able to trace its source so far. Anyway, the two pieces do not show Madhusudan even at his reasonable best, and are usually considered as interesting deviation in an otherwise powerfrl writer.

He was, as he said himself, that 'greatly talented man of genius' whose writings reflected his own life and whose life was an extension of his writings. In both, he communicated a sense of great discipline, wisdom and character. He not only rose to meet the challenges that Oriya literature and language faced at the turn of the century, but he shaped that literature and language in a way which was accepted and appreciated not only during his own time but is appreciated even today, after more than 80 years of his death. We can apply the same words to him as he did to Vidyasagar in his essay entitled 'Iswarchandra Vidyasagar' — "People think that he who has plenty of wealth, buildings, vehicles and servants etc. is surely a rich man. But the real rich man is he who through his knowledge, character and virtues brings benefit to the world. Even though he has no money, building, vehicles, etc. and even though he may be extremely poor, he remains a real rich man. He is like an ornament to be honoured as we honour a god. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar was such a rich man". So, too, was Madhusudan, a 'rich' and extremely lovable person.

Madhusudan Rao lived for about 60 years. Professionally he was a teacher and teacher-administrator. From an assistant teachership he rose to retire as a Member of the Indian Educational Service. He took to writing as a choice. So too, his indoctrination in Brahmo dharma. So too, his creation of new literature, particularly for children in schools. In all these he achieved great eminence and credibility. Many of his poems, even now, live in fond memories of his readers, who treasure them like valuable jewels, and his *Barnabodha*, the Oriya primer, became a household book in Orissa, like Vidyasagar's Bengali primer in Bengal. The boy born of a domiciled Marahatta family, who lost his mother early in life, came to be established as one of the most important and cherished personalities at the advent of the New Age in Orissa. A life lived in glory, and in death, a 'bright immortal figure in the sky,' as pointed out by Pandit Sivanath Sastri in funeral oration. That was Madhusudan Rao.

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[redacted] was one of the three most important writers in the latter part of the 19th century, the other two being Fakirmohan Senapati and Radhanath Ray, who were responsible for [redacted] Oriya literature subsequently [redacted] known as the Modern Age. There were [redacted] reasons for this, the most important of which [redacted] occupation of Orissa by the British. There were [redacted] administrative as well as in social structure [redacted] atmosphere at par with such changes [redacted] elsewhere in India. Particularly the spread [redacted] education and the introduction of printing [redacted] with the rise of a nascent middle class in the [redacted] produced a new generation of people to cope with [redacted] problems and attitudes towards life in the latter part of the 19th century. Madhusudan belonged to this generation, and it is often along with Fakirmohan and Radhanath, and through his poetry and otherwise activities, led it in understanding and perception. Though there have been biographical as well as critical discussions on Madhusudan in Oriya, there has been hardly any account of him in English. To that extent the present work is the first comprehensive work in English, both biographical and critical, on him.

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